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THE TIMES OF INDIA

INCLUDES 4 PAGES OF BANGALORE TIMES

INDIA'S LARGEST ENGLISH NEWSPAPER

"Pakistan joins Iran in their hour of grief and sorrow. Pakistan also expresses concern over violation of norms of int'l law. It is an **age-old convention that heads of state or govt should not be targeted**
—Pak PM SHEHBAZ SHARIF

Blatant killing of a sovereign leader and incitement of regime change unacceptable. Int'l community must send a clear message opposing the **world's regression to the law of the jungle**
—Chinese foreign minister WANG YI

There is renewed hope for the people of Iran. At the same time, **this moment carries a real risk of instability** that could push the region into a spiral of violence
—EU Comm prez URSULA VON DER LEYEN

...Murder of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran and members of his family committed in **cynical violation of all norms of human morality and international law**
—Russian prez VLADIMIR PUTIN

■ 3 US Soldiers Dead, Says Pentagon ■ Trump Claims US Sank 9 Iranian Warships, Killed 48 'In One Shot' ■ 8 Die In Missile Strike In Israel

Khamenei killed; Trump says Iran ready to talk

Day 2 Of War: Even As A Defiant Tehran Vows Revenge, Moves Afoot To De-Escalate

Hours after the killing of its supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was confirmed and it vowed revenge, Iran signalled late Sunday that it was ready to de-escalate the conflict that has spread to West Asia, threatening instability in the region. In an interview to Atlantic Magazine, Trump said Iran's "eventually" willing to talk, but for now the military operation "continues unabated".

Earlier, a statement by Oman's foreign ministry, which has been mediating US-Iran talks, said Tehran is open to any serious efforts at de-escalation. Omani foreign minister Badr Albusaidi also urged a ceasefire on a call with his Iranian counterpart, Abbas Araghchi, after Tehran launched a second day of strikes in response to ongoing US-Israeli air raids.

"It's moving along rapidly," Trump was quoted as saying in an interview with Fox News. He later claimed US had sunk nine Iranian ships. "Nobody can believe the success we're having, 48 leaders are gone in one shot." Iran confirmed the death of five high-ranking figures, including the country's defence minister, and chief of staff of armed forces.

The first US casualties were also confirmed by Pentagon Sunday: three soldiers killed, while five others were severely wounded in the joint attack. Israel's rescue services said eight people were killed and 28 wounded in a strike that hit a synagogue in the central town of Beit Shemesh, bringing the overall death toll in the country to 10. UAE said three people had died in Iranian strikes, while 58, including an Indian national, were injured.

▶Contd on: Inside jacket

Temp leadership council of 3 takes over Iran's reins

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian said Sunday a temporary leadership council "has begun its work", taking over the country's governance until a new supreme leader is selected. Ayatollah Ali Reza Arafi, 66, has been selected as the third member of the council, which also comprises the president and head of judiciary Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejehei. Arafi is part of the 88-member Assembly of Experts that will pick the next leader within three months. AGENCIES

FULL COVERAGE: PAGES 2, 5, 6, 10, 12 & Inside jacket

A White House official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Trump says he is new leadership wants to talk to him and that he has agreed. "They want to talk, and I have agreed to talk, so I will be talking to them. They should have done it sooner. They should have given what was very practical and easy to do sooner. They waited too long," Trump said in the interview from his Florida residence.

TOP-LEVEL HUDDLE BECAME SITTING TARGET FOR ISRAEL

- **CIA had been tracking Ayatollah Ali Khamenei for months.** Learned of meeting of top Iranian officials Saturday morning in the heart of Tehran, where Khamenei would be present
- US and Israel were to launch the strikes at night, but **changed the timing once they got intel** on the meeting
- **US honed the intel it had gathered on the Iranian leadership for the June 2025 strikes** that killed key Iranian military leaders and scientists and damaged nuclear site. Using US intel and its own, Israel executed the operation
- **Fighter jets took off from Israel around 6am; long-range missiles struck the Tehran compound around 9.40am**
- While top national security officials were in one building, **Khamenei was in another**
- Besides Khamenei, Iran confirmed 5 deaths: **IRGC chief** Gen Mohd Pakpour, **military council head** Ali Shamkhani, **nat'l intel chief** Gholamreza Rezaian, **chief of staff of armed forces** Abdolrahim Mousavi, and **defence minister** Aziz Nasirzadeh

Photos: ANI/NYT

Mourners gather in Tehran Sunday to protest against Khamenei's killing

Protesters at Srinagar's Lal Chowk on Sunday

MOURNING, CELEBRATION & CONCERN AS ATTACKS WIDEN

- Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader for nearly four decades, **turned it into a regional power**, with its foreign policy centred on unswerving hostility towards US and Israel
- Taking over from Ayatollah Khomeini, founder of the Islamic Republic, Khamenei blocked attempts at reforms at home, labelled public demands for change as "sedition" and **squelched dissent with arrests and executions**
- Abroad, he **trained and armed militias** in Gaza Strip, Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen
- Khamenei's death mourned and celebrated alike in Tehran, while protests break out in Pak and Baghdad. Demonstrations held in Srinagar, Delhi and Hyderabad as well
- **Saudi Arabia and UAE stepped up criticism of Iran's retaliatory strikes** across the Gulf. **'Return to your senses,' a senior foreign policy adviser to the UAE president** said. Saudi Arabia's foreign ministry said Iran's attacks needed a 'firm' international response

Safe-haven image cracks as Iran drones target US Gulf allies; Dubai Burj, airport hit

Dubai: The sail-shaped Burj Al Arab hotel, perched on Dubai's Gulf coast, has long embodied the city's opulence and ambition. Now, set ablaze as Iran launched missiles, it has become a symbol of the crisis engulfing the region.

Residents were aghast as hundreds of drones and missiles targeted the UAE, including capital Abu Dhabi, and other US Gulf allies — Oman, Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain — long-time refuges from regional conflict, on Saturday and Sunday. Blasts rattled windows of Dubai apartment towers and its bustling international airport was damaged, injuring four people.

Over 200 drones and 137 ballistic missiles targeted UAE, its defense ministry said. Most of those projectiles were intercepted, but 14 drones fell into Emirati territory and waters. Fragments of missiles and drones that were intercepted rained down across the city, causing further damage and injuries. NYT & AGENCIES

▶Contd on: Inside jacket

PM to UAE Prez: We stand in solidarity

PM Modi talked to UAE President and condemned the missile attacks while thanking him for "taking care" of Indians there. "Spoke with...my brother Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan... India stands in solidarity with the UAE," he posted. P5

Flight disruptions leave Indians, foreigners stuck

Across West Asia, thousands of Indians — tourists, expatriates, families with children — were left stranded after US-Israel strikes on Iran triggered Iranian retaliation, forcing mass airspace closures and shutting down Dubai, the world's busiest transit hub.

On Sunday, Indian carriers cancelled about 350 flights while west Asia-based airlines scrubbed more than 1,600 services across their networks. Airports reported mass cancellations to Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Doha and Jeddah.

Meanwhile, about 160 foreigners are stuck at Indian airports. Indian immigration has been giving temporary permits to some who want to exit, said an official. P2,5

Exercise caution, Indian nationals told

PM Modi took stock of the situation at a CCS meeting late Sunday. With airspace closed, govt advised Indian nationals in Iran and other places in the Gulf to exercise utmost caution and follow local security guidance. P5

Crew member killed as tanker hit off Oman

Marshall Islands-flagged product tanker MKD VYOM was hit by a projectile off the coast of Oman Sunday. A crew member was killed in the subsequent blast and fire. Another tanker, Palau-flagged Skylight, reportedly carrying 15 Indian nationals, also came under attack near the Strait of Hormuz off Oman, wounding four mariners on board. It wasn't clear who or what attacked the tanker. P6

12 killed in Pak cities as protesters target US missions; 11 die in POK's Skardu

Demonstrations against the US-Israeli bombing campaign in Iran and the killing of Khamenei turned violent in Pakistan, leading to the death of 12 protesters, including 10 in the port of Karachi where security guards at the US consulate fired on demonstrators who breached the outer wall, and two in Islamabad.

Eleven agitators were killed in POK's Skardu where the crowd torched a UN office.

Protesters in Karachi chanted "Death to America! Death to Israel!" at the consulate, where Reuters reporters heard gunfire and saw tear gas fired in surrounding streets. Consulate security staff opened fire at a crowd who were pushed back after breaching the outer security layer, said Sukhdev Assardas Hemnani, a local government spokesman. REUTERS

▶Contd on: Inside jacket

'Behind US-Israel attack, Saudi push'

Saturday's strikes on Iran came after weeks of lobbying by not just Israel, but also Saudi Arabia, Washington Post reported Saturday, citing four people familiar with the matter. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, backed by his brother and defence minister, made multiple private phone calls to Trump advocating a US attack, despite his public support for a diplomatic solution, it reported. Inside jacket

3 K'taka legislators, scores of others stranded in West Asia

IRAN CRISIS Govt Seeks MEA Intervention, Says All Kannadigas Safe In Gulf | Emergency Operation Centres To Function 24x7

Times News Network

Karnataka govt has sought the intervention of the ministry of external affairs (MEA) in bringing back Kannadigas stranded in the Gulf countries amid the conflict between Iran and Israel-United States.

From Ballari to Chitradurga to Mangaluru to Mysuru, hundreds of tourists and expatriates are stuck because of the retaliatory bombing by Iran following the killing of its Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei on Sunday. With missile attacks hitting Dubai airport, thousands have been left stranded there as well, including Congress MLAs Na Ra Bharath Reddy and SR Srinivas, and JD(S) MLC SL Bhojegowda.

Bhojegowda, who has released a video clip of him and his family from Dubai, said he was travelling from Johannesburg in South Africa to India, via Dubai. "But as soon as we reached Dubai airport, it was conveyed to us that all flights were grounded because of the air strikes by Iran," he said.

State Election Commissioner SG Sangreshi and Pushpa Amarnath, vice-chairperson of Karnataka State Guarantee Schemes Implementation Committee, have also been unable to return. "The situation here is under control. I was scheduled to fly to Bengaluru on Sunday. However, because of the prevailing circumstances, it was cancelled. So I'm still in Dubai," Sangreshi said, adding that the chief minister has spoken to them and promised full support.

As of Sunday night, 84 Kannadigas are stranded in the UAE (Dubai) and eight in Bahrain. Of those in the UAE, 32 are from Ballari, 19 from Bengaluru, eight from Davangere, five from Chikkamagaluru, four from Kodagu, three each from Raichur and Shivamogga, two each from Udupi, Kalaburagi, and Vijayapura, and one each from Chikkaballapur and Tumakuru. In Bahrain, the stranded individuals include four from Hassan, three from Udupi and one from Kodagu, all of whom are on employment or visit visas.

Will bring them back: CM

Taking to social media, CM Siddaramaiah said he has spoken to a few of the Kannadigas, including Bhojegowda, to find out their position in Dubai, and also directed the chief secretary to coordinate with the MEA to safely bring back the state's citizens. "It is quite comforting to understand that Kannadigas have taken shelter in safe places; there is no need to be anxious about their return. The govt is taking the responsibility of bringing them back safely," he stated.

Deputy chief minister DK Shivakumar also said the govt is coordinating with Kannada associations in the Gulf countries that are under attack, to seek assistance for the stranded tourists and take stock of their general welfare.

Karnataka has activated its state emergency operation centres (SEOC) and all district emergency operations (DEOC), which will be functioning 24x7. The centres will disseminate all the relevant advisories from the Gulf countries and extend assistance if necessary. The govt has asked citizens to contact the local embassies and consulates in those countries, use the Sarthi Sahayata portal and other official portals to seek assistance.

Sunday evening, chief secretary Shalini Rajneesh sent out letters to MEA secretary Vikrant Misri and civil aviation secretary Samir Kumar Sinha, seeking their assistance in helping the stranded passengers with complimentary boarding and extended flexibility in ticket rescheduling/waivers of additional charges, apart from arranging enough flights.

Struggling for funds

Meanwhile, 35 people from Ballari district, who had travelled to Dubai on a tour, are stranded. A total of 50 people from the state, including 15 from Chitradurga, had left Ballari for Dubai on Feb 24 and were scheduled to return on Feb 28. However, as air strikes began, flight operations were suspended, leaving them stuck in Dubai.

Some of the tourists contacted their relatives through video calls and said they had exhausted their trip funds. With hotel rooms costing between Rs 15,000 and Rs 20,000 per person per night, they were unable to afford accommodation and remained outside the airport. After being informed of this, Reddy and Ballari Rural MLA B Nagendra arranged accommodation for them in service quarters near the airport. The group, consisting of 23 women and 27 men, is currently staying there and is safe, Nagendra said. One of the air strikes allegedly occurred near Reddy's hotel, causing brief concern, but he and the tourists were safe, added Nagendra.

Expats stuck in India

Tens of expatriates who had booked tickets to travel to Gulf destinations and other countries were stranded in India due to travel restrictions on several routes. Among those affected was M Mohandas Kamath, who was to return to Kuwait from Mangaluru. According to him, the conditions in Kuwait have become tense, with reports of supermarkets running out of supplies, schools declared closed until March 3, online classes announced, and scheduled exams cancelled.

At Mangaluru International Airport, multiple services to Gulf destinations were cancelled Sunday. The cancelled flights included Mangaluru-Jeddah (both directions), Mangaluru-Muscat (both directions), Mangaluru–Dubai (both directions), as well as flights from Mangaluru to Bahrain and Abu Dhabi.

Meanwhile, former CM and Haveri MP Basavaraj Bommai claimed the Indian govt has already taken several measures, and the state needs to work to bring citizens back safely. "The responsibility to safely bring back Indians, especially Kannadigas, lies with the state govt," he added.

Pics: TOI

ANGERED: Members of Muslim community gathered in Richmond Town in the city Sunday for a condolence meeting, condemning the attack on Iran

ATTACK ON IRAN UNNECESSARY, SAYS CM

Chief minister **Siddaramaiah** on Sunday stated that the US attack on Iran and its leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was "unnecessary". He criticised the US, noting that while it preaches peace on the one hand, it engages in war on the other. Speaking to reporters at Rastrakavi Kuvempu Airport in Shivamogga, he said he has prayed for the peace of Khamenei's soul. Deputy chief minister DK Shivakumar also took a similar stand, reiterating that innocent lives were being lost due to the conflict, including 60 schoolchildren who died in an air strike in Iran. TNN

Hundreds gather in B'luru for solidarity march

Hundreds of Shia Muslims gathered in Richmond Town Sunday for a condolence meeting and solidarity march over the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in a US-Israel strike.

The march was organised by Anjuman E Imamia and Idara E Faizul Islam, Bengaluru. Protesters assembled in front of Masjid-e-Askari and Masjid-E-Imam Al Qayem in Anepalya, holding photographs of Khamenei and raising anti-Israel and anti-US slogans. Participants included elderly men and women, youngsters, and children. The gathering later moved to the Shia cemetery in Richmond Town, where prayers were offered and tributes paid. MLA NA Haris of Shantinagar was present, along with Aga Sultan, chairman, Central Relief Committee, Karnataka.

Alizay Fatima, a protester, described the mood as emotional and spiritual. "Today, our hearts are heavy. For many of us, he (Khamenei) was not just a political leader; he was a symbol of resistance and a voice that spoke when others chose silence."

— Syeda Tatheer Hussain

Savings run out for 50 pilgrims

Vindhya.Pabolu@timesofindia.com

Bengaluru: Around 50 pilgrims from Bengaluru visiting Medina are now stranded in Saudi Arabia as tensions in West Asia have disrupted air travel.

IN SAUDI ARABIA

The group was scheduled to return at 2am on March 2. Instead, it remains stuck in Medina due to flight cancellations. With women, toddlers, and elderly pilgrims among them, the families say they have been scrambling for accommodation and assistance while costs mount.

The tourists flew out of Bengaluru on Feb 15 and have been staying at Al Shams Hostel in Medina since Thursday. According to family members, they learnt of the disruption around 7.30pm local time Saturday. Since then, many say, they have barely slept, making repeated calls for help.

One of them, Mohammed Inayath, 32, a content creator from RT Nagar, reached out to chief minister Siddaramaiah in the early hours of Sunday through a post on X. "We're trying to extend our stay for one more day, but with women, children, and heavy luggage, finding accommodation is difficult. Rooms cost about Rs 2,000 per person per day with food, which is too high for many of us. The travel agent withdrew support, and the (Indian) embassy directed us back to the agent. We're trying to contact local leaders, but so far, there has been no response. The situation is calm, but we urgently need help to return home. I have my whole family with me; it's really hard being stuck," he told **TOI**.

The group has been staying at Medina's Al Shams Hostel since Thursday

Abdul Mannan, 48, a signboard maker from Gandhinagar, said the trip has already stretched family savings. "This is my first visit to Medina with my family. We spent about Rs 80,000 per person and already used most of our savings. With hotel rooms at around Rs 1,500 per day and food costing 60 Riyals (Rs 1,456), many in the group are struggling. The travel agent left us to manage on our own, and arranging help from India is difficult... We urge the govt to help us return home soon," Mannan said.

Back home, anxiety is spreading across neighbourhoods in Bengaluru. A friend of one of the tourists told **TOI**: "I spoke with him yesterday evening; at that time, he said he was safe. Now I am contacting a few locals I know there to help them."

For some families, the fear is personal and immediate. A 24-year-old student from Hulimavu said: "My sister is pregnant, and our entire family is worried about her... We are unable to do anything to bring them back and can only hope for their safety. She saw two missiles being dropped while she and her husband were on their way to her aunt's place, and she was extremely stressed. I'm scared about her medical condition now."

Ashik PA, who has been working in Dubai for the past three years and has come to Bengaluru to meet friends, is now uncertain about his return. "I came last week and was supposed to return by the end of the week. Now I'm stuck. I just started a new job and don't know what to do."

50 B'LURU FLIGHTS CANCELLED: KIA

The conflict in West Asia resulted in the cancellation of 50 flights linking Bengaluru to key parts of the region Sunday, according to KIA.

As many as 22 arrivals and 28 departures were cancelled as of 6pm. Routes to key Gulf destinations — Abu Dhabi, Riyadh, Jeddah, Dammam, Dubai, and Doha — bore the brunt, impacting hundreds of passengers. The disruption, which began late evening Saturday, rippled into early Sunday. Airport officials said overall operations remained normal. On Saturday too, UAE routes had accounted for a significant part of the cancellations. IndiGo recorded the most cancellations, followed by Air India Express, Emirates, and Etihad.

SHOCK & SILENCE AS ALIPUR MOURNS

Grief swept through Alipur village in Chikkaballapur district, about 70km from Bengaluru, following reports of the death of Iranian leader Ali Khamenei.

The Shia-majority village, home to around 30,000 people, announced a three-day mourning period. Shops and other commercial establishments remained shut Sunday, while public events and celebrations were cancelled. Residents observed silence and gathered for special prayers at the local Jafria Masjid.

Many mourners, dressed in black and carrying black flags, joined the procession condemning the killing. Some carried photographs of Khamenei and raised slogans during the march. Shafeeq Abidl, 68, who has lived in Alipur all his life, told **TOI** that Khamenei was regarded as a religious guide by many. "He also started a hospital here, which helps many people of all religions. During the Iranian revolution of 1991, when Iran had MPs, they came to Alipur."

The villagers also recalled that Khamenei had visited Alipur four decades ago at the community's invitation. They expressed anguish over the strikes against Iran and urged the Indian govt to take steps to safeguard Indians residing in Gulf countries. Punith, sub-inspector of police, Manchenahalli, said security arrangements have been made to prevent any untoward incident.

— Vindhya Pabolu & Ranganath K

HEALTH AWARENESS INITIATIVE

Take 1 step to learn more about obesity

1] OBESITY IS A CHRONIC DISEASE[1]

"Obesity isn't a failure of willpower - it's a chronic, biological disease shaped by genetic, environmental and behavioural factors. Recognizing it as a disease is the first step. Blame never helps but understanding always does[1]."

Dr Arpandev Bhattacharyya
Senior Consultant Endocrinologist, Manipal Hospital, Old Airport Road, Bengaluru

2] DIET & EXERCISE ALONE ARE OFTEN NOT ENOUGH[2]

"Diet and exercise matter enormously in weight loss, but biology often pushes people with obesity back to their starting point. This 'weight regain cycle' can be exhausting. It's not about weakness, lack of motivation or willpower - it's about your own biology fighting against you. People deserve help, not self blame[2]."

Dr C V Harinarayan
Director - Diabetes & Endocrinology, Sakra World Hospital, Bengaluru

3] MEDICAL SUPPORT CAN BREAK THE CYCLE[3]

"Obesity should be treated like the medical condition it is. A doctor can help break the cycle with safe, modern, medical treatment.[3] Research shows Indians wait up to 2 years to seek medical help.[4] This only delays results and increases one's risk of complications such as type 2 diabetes, heart & liver diseases, polycystic ovarian disease (PCOS), amongst others.[5] Hence, talk to your doctor. Early medical support can change the whole trajectory[1]."

Dr Pramila Kalra
Professor & Senior Consultant Endocrinologist, Ramaiah Medical College & Hospital, Bengaluru

4] EVEN 5% WEIGHT LOSS CAN LEAD TO HEALTH BENEFITS[1,5-7]

- "0-5% weight loss → Improves hypertension and blood sugar
- 5-10% weight loss → Helps prevent type 2 diabetes, PCOS, and improves dyslipidemia.
- 10–15% weight loss → Reduces risk of cardiovascular disease, obstructive sleep apnoea (OSAS), and knee osteoarthritis.
- >15% weight loss → May lead from pre-diabetes to normal blood sugar, Triglycerides (TG), blood pressure (BP), and HbA1c continue to decrease.

Modern therapies may help protect long term health, not just change numbers on the scale[3]."

Dr Prasannakumar K M
Consultant Endocrinologist, Centre for Diabetes and Endocrine Care, Bengaluru

5] TRUST ORIGINAL INNOVATIVE THERAPIES BACKED BY STRONG EVIDENCE

"When you talk to your doctor ask about original innovative therapies backed by rigorous clinical trials and strong real world experience. The most trusted options are those studied deeply across multiple obesity related conditions and that help with weight loss without significant muscle loss. Quality of weight loss (more fat loss vs muscle loss) matters, especially for lifelong health[5]."

Dr Ganapathi Bantwal
Endocrinologist

A conversation with your doctor could be the first step toward long term health and a life free from guilt and stigma.
This World Obesity Day, trust the original in obesity care.

For people living with overweight and obesity. Weight management outcomes may vary depending on your treatment journey and should be pursued under the guidance of a registered healthcare professional. The views expressed belong to the doctor. This is for educational purposes only. [illegible] References: [illegible]

Talk to a doctor. 86554 52746
Choose your weight. wegowithyou.org

Pet shop violations raise activists' hackles

Mini.Thomas@timesofindia.com

Bengaluru: A collective of animal rights activists has submitted a report to Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) chief commissioner Maheshwar Rao, documenting widespread violations by pet shops across the city.

The report describes cramped cages, soiled enclosures, and inadequate space, restricting the animals' ability to move freely. In some bird aviaries, birds cannot spread their wings, hop, or fly. Temperature control is inadequate for animals. The conditions reflect cruelty, neglect, and official apathy, and compromise the health and well-being of the animals kept for sale, especially because of a lack of isolation areas for sick and potentially infected animals.

Activists found animals protected under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, being displayed for sale at several outlets in violation of the provisions of the Act and the Pet Shop Rules, posing conservation concerns and threatening efforts to safeguard endangered wildlife.

Around 90% of the pet shops in the city do not have certificates of registration, according to Laavanya Koushik, an animal rights activist who works with the Federation of Indian Animal Protection Organisations, citing RTI reports. Most operate from pavements or makeshift structures, exposing birds and animals to heat, odour, and noise. Several lack essential facilities such as electricity, water supply, power backup, and proper ventilation.

TOI

Male chicks dipped in toxic dye — which results in premature death — were found displayed at a shop

Hygiene & safety issues

Hygiene is compromised in most shops, with vessels used for food and water often covered with excreta, and reused without proper cleaning. Activists warned that the neglect could cause serious health problems in animals, including a risk of death.

The report highlights that several enclosures contain a mix of different species or age groups, in violation of Rule 7(2)(i) of the Pet Shop Rules, which require all pet animals displayed or housed in the same enclosure to be of the same species and age group. Mixing causes stress and aggression among animals, increasing the risk of bullying and fighting.

Animal rights activists have cautioned people against buying pets from such shops, suggesting they should instead care for community animals. "These animals are bred in captivity. If you genuinely care about animals, look around you," said Ritwik Bhonsle of the People for Animals-Public Policy Foundation.

Meanwhile, Kumar Pushkar, PCCF (wildlife) and chief wildlife warden of Karnataka, said: "It is mandatory for every dealer to get registered and declare all their stock to the forest department. In case of violation, action shall be taken to book wildlife cases against such dealers, and all the animals listed in the Wildlife Act, including exotic species, shall be seized."

FORM IV
(See Rule 8)

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3) PNB Finance & Industries Limited, 2nd Floor, Property no. 3/8, Asaf Ali Road, Darya Ganj, Central Delhi, New Delhi-110002.
4) Camac Commercial Co. Ltd, 2nd Floor, Property No. 22-A, Asaf Ali Road, Darya Ganj, Central Delhi, New Delhi-110002
5) Arth Udyog Limited, 4th Floor, 15, Pratap Nagar, Mayur Vihar, Phase-1 East Delhi, India- 110091
6) Esclerica Services Limited, 2nd Floor, Property No. 3/8, Asaf Ali Road, Darya Ganj, Central Delhi New Delhi-110002.
7) TM Investments Limited, 614, Plot No. 7, Roots Tower, Laxmi Nagar, District Centre, East Delhi, New Delhi-110092
8) Ashoka Viniyoga Limited, 77A, Block-B Greater Kailash-1, New Delhi-110048

I, Manjeet Singh Dhami, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

02.03.2026

Sd/- Manjeet Singh Dhami
Publisher

Mahadevapura set to get 50km of safe footpaths

Times News Network

Bengaluru: Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) chief commissioner Maheshwar Rao has directed officials to develop 50km of safe and accessible pedestrian pathways in Mahadevapura zone in two months, prioritising stretches along Metro corridors.

He issued the directions after flagging off a 10km walkathon from Phoenix Mall to Hope Farm under the Bengaluru East city corporation limits Sunday. The inspection covered a continuous stretch along the Purple Line corridor and was attended by over 120 citizens. During the walk, officials identified the need for slab repairs at 10 locations, unauthorised vehicle parking at two spots, construction material dumped at one location, one instance of encroachment, and four Bescom-related technical issues. Officials were instructed to address the deficiencies immediately. Rao also directed authorities to remove obstacles on footpaths, resolve road-widening bottlenecks, and clear encroachments to ensure uninterrupted pedestrian movement.

The walk marked the 11th inspection under 'Project Wakaluru', through which 88km of footpaths across the city have been reviewed so far.

Newlywed couple dies in crash

A couple, married on Feb 13, died in a road crash at Neeralagi Cross in Shiggaon taluk, Haveri district, on National Highway-48 Sunday.

The deceased have been identified as Karthik Hugar, 34, and Aishwarya Hugar, 30, residents of Haveri. The accident occurred when their car rammed a parked truck around 5am. Family sources said Karthik had taken his wife, brother-in-law, and a friend to Navalgund to have darshan of Kamadeva, installed on account of Holi Hunnime there. Police and fire personnel struggled to remove the bodies from the car, which were completely mutilated in the crash. TNN

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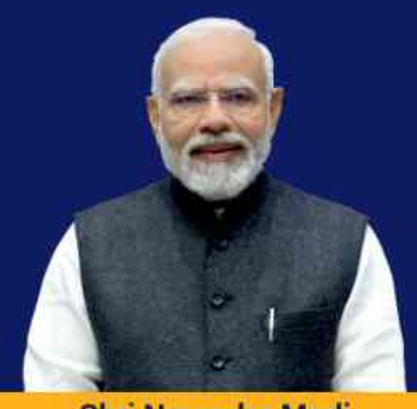
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SHUT OUT BY DESIGN

A statewide audit finds that ramps, toilets, parking, and tactile paths remain largely unusable, leaving persons with disabilities to navigate a state that still keeps them out

Anush.S@timesofindia.com

On most mornings, Devaraj KM leaves his home in Chintamani before sunrise, wooden stick in hand, left leg stiff from polio. He has lived with the condition since he was three.

Now 43, Devaraj is an accountant with the Association for People with Disabilities (APD) in Bengaluru. And his biggest challenge is not his job, but getting there. "I rely on KSRTC to travel to and from Bengaluru. That's a tough daily battle as most buses are high-floor ones," he says. Some days, he doesn't get a seat. "BMTC has reservations, but in KSRTC, there are many days when I stand throughout the 60km journey. People don't listen when I ask them to move." Conductors rarely step in.

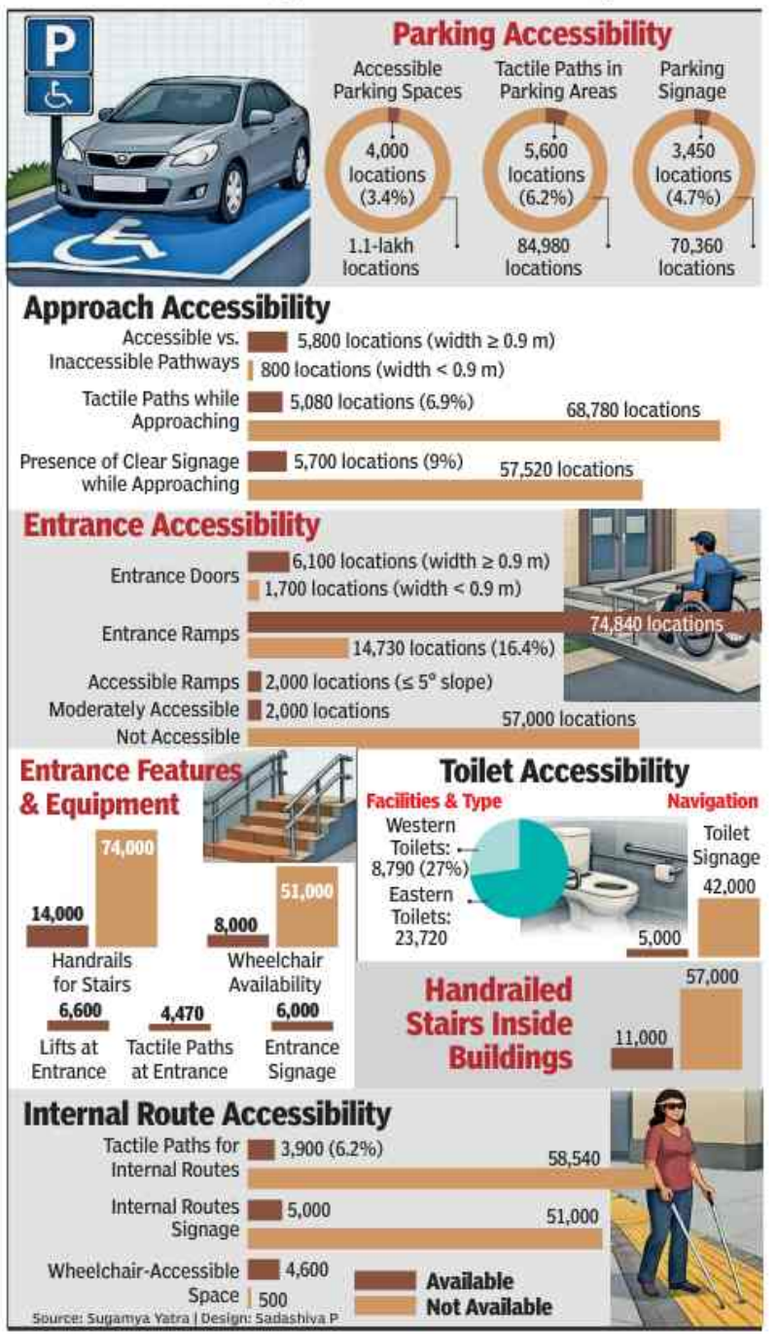
For Devaraj, broken pavements are as much a barrier as high bus steps. "Footpaths are barely accessible. Some don't even have ramps. Several have misplaced slabs exposing drains," he says. His experience mirrors the findings of a statewide accessibility audit, Sugamya Yatra, which covered over 1.8 lakh locations. It found that even where accessibility features exist, they're often poorly designed or non-functional.

Of nearly 1.2 lakh locations that were assessed for parking, 3,946 (3.3%) had accessible parking spaces. As many as 74,840 out of 89,564 locations had ramps. Only 8,164 of 59,025 locations had wheelchairs. Tactile pathways were present in just a fraction of internal routes. Of 32,507 toilets, 8,788 were Western-style ones.

In Bengaluru Urban alone, accessibility gaps were flagged at 7,636 locations. Around 80% of Metro stations had signage for parking accessibility, better than other districts. Yet, the absence of tactile pathways and approach-route signage at most sites makes navigation difficult. Ashmira, 35, visually impaired since birth, says the cost of navigation goes beyond inconvenience. "When I was in Mumbai, I mostly used public transport. In Bengaluru, that's almost impossible." She depends largely on autos, which are expensive. Walking is no easier. "When you're walking, vehicles come really close to you, and you don't know what type they are. When I walk with someone, I have to walk exactly behind them," she says.

For Arbeena Kausar, 25, the barriers began at school. The first in her family to be diagnosed with dwarfism, she struggled to walk in her early years before medical intervention helped her gain mobility. When in class 6, she tried to board a BMTC bus and failed. "The floors are very high in most buses. Even with low-floor buses, access to ramps is limited. Climbing steps is difficult too. How can I think of stepping onto an escalator? We also need public toilets. Even where there are toilets exclusively for PwDs, they're gender neutral. There should be separate toilets for men and women."

Manmeet Nanda, additional secretary, department of empowerment of persons with disabilities, said the audit was meant to capture these everyday obstacles. "...You don't realise these small things," she said. Based on the audit, the govt sought a budget to address gaps, and APD has projected Rs 396 crore. APD policy advocacy head Bhumika Modh said while accessibility gaps persist across states, Karnataka's effort to quantify them stands out. The audit records some progress in entrances and toilets. But for PwDs, accessibility is measured not in percentages or crores, but in whether they can board a bus, find a toilet, or walk down a pavement without fear.



Transport inspector booked for issuing 10k FCs sans verification

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: A senior transport inspector was booked Saturday for allegedly issuing fitness certificates (FCs) to 10,210 vehicles from other states, including Gujarat, without conducting physical inspections.

The accused, Nisar Ahmed of the Bangalore Central RTO, was suspended last month after authorities in Gujarat's transport department raised an alert. Ahmed retired from service on Jan 31 while under suspension, though no legal proceedings had been initiated against him at the time.

NON-KARNATAKA CARRIERS

The irregularities came to light after the Gujarat transport department notified Karnataka authorities and shared toll plaza data indicating that the vehicles had crossed toll booths within Gujarat on the same days their FCs were reportedly being processed in Bengaluru.

On Feb 12, S Nataraj Sharma, lawyer and president of the Federation of Private Transport Associations, submitted a written complaint to transport minister Ramalinga Reddy and transport commissioner Yogesh AM, seeking a high-level inquiry against four officials, including Ahmed.

In his complaint, Sharma urged authorities to examine CCTV footage, inspection registers, Vahan portal entries, and test records. "Suspend the officers concerned pending inquiry if prima facie material is found. Take stringent disciplinary and legal action to prevent recurrence of such irregularities," he stated. Taking cognisance of the complaint, the transport commissioner, on Feb 13, directed the joint commissioner of transport to conduct a probe. After the report was submitted, an FIR was registered against Ahmed under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

In the wake of the scam, the transport department issued fresh guidelines last month mandating that all vehicles be inspected strictly at designated locations. Under the revised protocol, vehicle inspectors must capture photographs clearly showing the licence plate along with the date, time and location. These images must be submitted to department authorities and uploaded to the Vahan portal.

RTOs must physically inspect 20% of vehicles

To enhance accountability, regional transport officers (RTOs) or office heads are now required to physically inspect at least 20% of all vehicles presented for fitness certification. Emphasis will be placed on verifying vehicles registered in other states before fitness certificates are issued.

"We have already begun deploying mobile phone-based geo-fencing technology to prevent misuse of the system. We are doing our best to ensure such incidents are not repeated," transport commissioner Yogesh said. TNN

3 more held for gangrape of 19-year-old

Bengaluru: Amruthahally police, investigating the alleged gangrape of a 19-year-old from Tamil Nadu at a villa in Jakkur, have arrested three more people, taking the total number of arrests to five so far.

The arrested have been identified as Shravan, 21, a native of Shivamogga; Anirudh, 33, from Davanagere; and Mohit Jain 23, from Gujarat. The two arrested earlier are Dixon Santra, 21, from Kolkata, and Nikhil HD, 34, a resident of Sakaleshpura in Hassan district, who is into real estate business.

According to deputy commissioner of police (north-east) GK Mithun Kumar, the fresh arrests were made based on the confession of the two men arrested earlier, as they had allegedly supported the crime in different capacities.

The survivor, a graduation student at a private college in the city, alleged that she came in contact with Dixon on Instagram. She claimed he trapped her on the pretext of love and invited her to a party at a villa on the night of Feb 14. She reached the villa in the early hours of Feb 15 along with a friend, where Dixon introduced her to Nikhil. The girl alleged that she was forced to consume a pill, after which she felt dizzy. While she was semi-conscious, she was allegedly sexually assaulted by two men.

The complaint was lodged after Nikhil approached Malleswaram police, alleging a honey-trap attempt.

A senior officer said Anirudh, a contractor, had allegedly assisted in booking the villa belonging to an IPS officer. Police clarified that the IPS officer had rented out the villa to one person, who later sub-leased it to a third party, and that the officer was unaware of the premises being used for such a party. TNN

Mattress unit catches fire, 2 hurt

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: An accidental fire broke out at a mattress and sofa manufacturing unit-cum-godown in Gollahalli village, Anjanapura, on the city's outskirts early Sunday, sending thick plumes of smoke across the area and triggering panic among residents.

Two persons — a fire and emergency services responder and a mini goods vehicle driver — sustained injuries. Both are undergoing treatment and are out of danger. Police said their identities are yet to be confirmed.

The blaze at Grace Traders was reported around 8.20am, with fire officials receiving an alert at 8.40am. Nine vehicles along with around 70 personnel, including 10 officers, were deployed. The fire was brought under control by noon and fully extinguished by 3.30pm. The unit, spread across roughly 200x100 sqft, suffered extensive damage. Flames also spread to the adjacent Platinum Gardenia apartment complex, shattering windowpanes on four floors. Residents were evacuated as a precaution, and no injuries were reported from the building.

The mini goods vehicle driver was inside the premises when the fire broke out and was injured while trying to escape. A fire services personnel was hurt during operations when water splashed back from burning materials.

Officials said a transformer located between the unit and the apartment complex could be linked to the fire, though an electrical fault within the unit is also being examined. The electrical inspector's report is awaited. Police said the loss is yet to be assessed and a case will be registered.

TOI

UP IN FLAMES: The blaze at the outlet sparked panic in Anjanapura

35 tonnes of waste cleared in mega drive

Bengaluru: The Bengaluru North City Corporation (BNCC) conducted a mega cleanliness drive Sunday, clearing 35.7 tonnes of waste across its jurisdiction.

B'LURU NORTH

A total of 1,823 participants, including members of residents' welfare associations, took part in 42 plogging drives organised as part of the campaign.

Around 400 volunteers participated from Byatarayanapura division, 179 from Dasarahalli, 320 from Hebbal, 250 from Pulakeshinagar, 430 from Sarvajnanagar, 250 from Yelahanka, and 75 from RR Nagar division. In total, 81 vacant sites were cleaned across the seven divisions. TNN

HC: Tribunal can hear personal cover claims

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Bengaluru: The Karnataka high court has held that a motor accident claims tribunal (MACT) is not stripped of jurisdiction to examine claims relating to personal accident (PA) cover under a motor insurance policy.

Justice K Manmadha Rao made the observation while dismissing an appeal filed by The New India Assurance Company, which had challenged an order of the MACT in Belagavi refusing to reject a claim petition at the preliminary stage.

VEHICLE ACCIDENTS

The case arose from an accident that occurred on April 8, 2023, when Umar Farooque, a tailor and resident of Belagavi, suffered serious injuries after his motorcycle allegedly skidded off the road. He filed a claim petition stating that he had purchased a package motor insurance policy that included an additional premium for a personal accident cover of Rs 15 lakh as the owner-driver.

The insurance company sought a dismissal of the claim under Section 166 of the Motor Vehicles Act, contending that the provision enables adjudication only of third-party claims before the tribunal.

According to the insurer, a personal accident claim by the insured is a matter of private contract between the parties and falls outside the jurisdiction of the MACT.

After the tribunal rejected its preliminary application, the insurer approached HC.

The high court observed that the tribunal is empowered to mould the relief in line with the insurance contract and determine the extent of liability after a full trial.

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CHANGE begins Here

Hattrick on horizon as state set to revise budget outlay downwards

Chethan Kumar & BV Shivashankar | TNN

Bengaluru: For a third year in a row, the govt is likely to scale down the budget outlay for the current fiscal to around Rs 3.95-lakh-crore from nearly Rs 4.1-lakh-crore as it anticipates a shortfall in revenue.

The strain in revenue collection is visible. For 2025-26, the state had targeted a little over Rs 2-lakh-crore from its own taxes. Up to Jan, it had collected a little over Rs 1.5-lakh-crore, or about 72.4% of the target. By the end of the fiscal, officials expect collections to reach around 80%, or roughly Rs 1.8-lakh-crore.

Non-tax revenue shows a similar pattern. Against a target of Rs 16,500 crore, the state has collected only Rs 9,654 crore (58.5%) so far. By the close of the financial year, this is likely to reach Rs 11,580 crore (about 70%).

Taken together, the combined revenue target from these two heads stands at more than Rs 2.2-lakh-crore. The govt is expected to realise around Rs 2-lakh-crore — a gap of Rs 24,600 crore.

The shortfall has prompted a review of expenditure. CM Siddaramaiah's economic adviser Basavaraj Rayareddi, while confirming the outlay is expected to be revised, pegged the shortfall at Rs 18,000 crore.

"Even the Centre cut its budget outlay from Rs 50.6-lakh-crore to Rs 49-lakh-crore," said Ritesh Kumar Singh, additional chief secretary, finance. "We are evaluating all possible means to narrow the gap and reduce the extent of downward revision. Revenue collection in March, therefore, is crucial."

The Union govt's downward revision is a reminder that sub-national budgets do not operate in isolation. Slower transfers or cautious central spending can ripple through state finances.

What this means for 2026-27

A lower revised estimate for 2025-26 becomes the base for next year's budget. If the state closes this year with a smaller outlay and weaker revenue realisation, it reduces the room to announce new schemes or expand capital expenditure in 2026-27 without widening the fiscal deficit.

As things stand, officials said the CM is looking to increase next fiscal's outlay by at least 10%. The increase would be against the revised outlay for 2025-26.

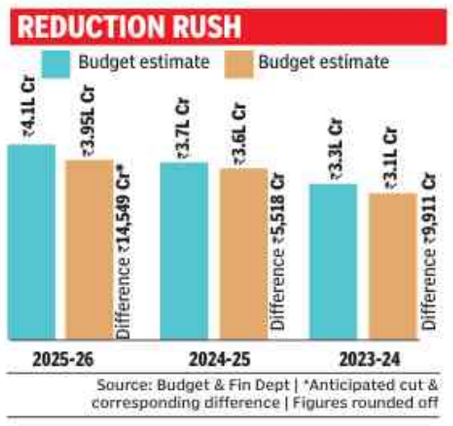
"It's now a trend for govts to project revenues at high levels in the budget and revise them towards the end," said D Rajashekhar, former director, Institute for Social and Economic Change (Isec). "They do it for multiple reasons. One reason is the intent to borrow more. The amount of borrowing is capped based on revenue, expenditure, and economic growth. So, govts tend to project both higher revenue and expenditure than what they can achieve."

If revenue growth does not rise, the 2026-27 budget may lean towards tighter expenditure controls, deferment of capital works, or sharper revenue mobilisation measures. Much will depend on March collections, which officials describe as decisive.

Friday's budget, therefore, will have to reconcile ambition with arithmetic.

TOI

BIG BASH: CM Siddaramaiah at the wedding of Gubbi MLA SR Srinivas's son and former MP SP Muddahanumegowda's daughter in Tumakuru on Sunday



Source: Budget & Fin Dept | *Anticipated cut & corresponding difference | Figures rounded off

FAITH & SOCIAL WORK

State grants Dalit, OBC mutts 36 acres

The govt has allotted 36 acres and 36 guntas of land to 22 mutts and institutions representing Dalit and Other Backward Classes at Ravuthanahalli in Dasanapura hobli, Bengaluru North. Cabinet approval was granted last month, and formal orders were issued recently. Officials said the allotments are aimed at supporting religious and social institutions run by marginalised communities, with conditions to prevent commercial misuse. Mutts, which run schools, hospitals and welfare centres, hold influence within caste groups and can affect voting patterns.

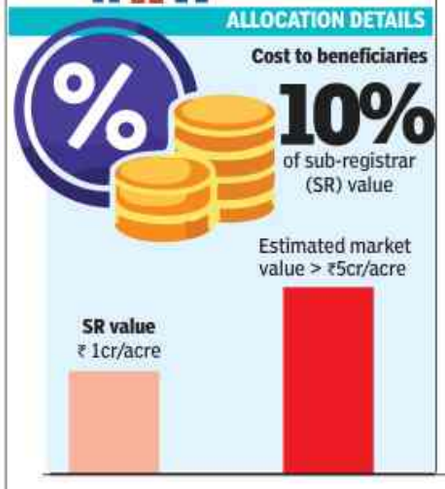
Santosh Kumar B reports

BROAD DETAILS

Allotment of **36 acres & 36 guntas** to marginalised communities.
In **Survey Nos. 57 & 58, Ravuttanahalli,** Dasanapura hobli

Beneficiaries: 22 mutts and institutions

ALLOCATION DETAILS



WHO GOT WHAT

4 ACRES AND ABOVE

- **Sri Kaginele Mahasamsthana Kanaka Gurupeetha** – 4 acres 18 guntas
- **Sri Jagadguru Kunchitiga Maha Samsthana Matha** – 4 acres 1 gunta
- **Sri Jagadguru Siddarameshwara Mahasamsthana Bhovi Gurupeeta** – 4 acres
- **Sri Shivasharana Madara Chennaiah Gurupeeta Trust** – 4 acres 30 guntas
- **Sri Maharishi Valmiki Gurupeetha Trust** – 4 acres 18 guntas
- **Sri Upaveera Jagadguru Vidya Samsthe** – 4 acres

BELOW 2 ACRES

- **Kalidasa Mattu Sangolli Rayanna Vidyarthigala Sangha** – 2 acres
- **Niketana Education Trust** – 1 acre 24 guntas
- **Karnataka Rajya Ahalya Bai Holkar Mahila Sangha** – 1 acre

BELOW 1 ACRE (IN GUNTAS)

- **Akhila Bharata Sri Krishna Yadava Mahasamsthana** – 31 guntas
- **Sri Narayana Guru Mahasamsthana** – 31 guntas
- **Jagadguru Sri Machideva Mahasamsthana Mutt** – 32 guntas
- **Nijasharana Ambigara Choudayya Gurupeeta** – 32 guntas
- **Sri Hadapada Appanna Devara Mahasamsthana Mutt Trust** – 31 guntas
- **Sri Kumbara Gundaya Mahasamsthana Mutt** – 31 guntas
- **Sri Savita Peeta Charitable Trust** – 30 guntas
- **Hema-Vema Sadbhavana Gurupeeta** – 23 guntas
- **SVS Oorugolu Vruddhashrama Charitable Trust** – 35 guntas
- **Hindulida Dalita Matadeeshara Okkoota** – 35 guntas
- **Chalawadi Guru Peeta** – 32 guntas
- **Akhila Karnataka Sri Guru Medara Keteshwara Trust** – 30 guntas
- **Hatha Yogi Sri Kalappa Swamy Matha Seva Trust** – 32 guntas

The practice of allocating land to mutts gained momentum when BS Yediyurappa was chief minister

While at the helm, **Yediyurappa allocated land and grants to Lingayat mutts to strengthen his political position**

Source: Revenue department

TOI

JUST MINGLING: Deputy CM DK Shivakumar with Union minister Prahlad Joshi and state BJP chief BY Vijayendra at Jagadguru Renukacharya Jayanti Yuvajanotsava, in Chikkamagaluru on Sunday

JSW Steel fails to meet ore mining target, loses ₹127cr

Niranjan.Kaggere@timesofindia.com

Bengaluru: In a setback to JSW Steel Ltd, the state govt encashed the company's performance security deposit and has imposed a penalty for failing to meet the minimum iron ore production requirement at its Chitradurga mining block.

The move came after the Supreme Court of India recently declined to stay the state's decision to encash bank guarantees worth Rs 127 crore.

Mines and geology officials said the lease was executed in 2019 for an ore block spread over 93.6 hectares in and around Bedarabommanahalli, Hirekandavadi, and adjoining villages of Chitradurga and Holalkere taluks.

Under the Mineral (Auction) Rules, 2015, the company was required to achieve a minimum guaranteed dispatch/production target. It furnished bank guarantees as performance security.

During a review, district mining officials found the company had failed to meet the minimum guaranteed dispatch for 2020-21 and 2021-22. As per the agreement, JSW Steel was required to dispatch nearly 8 lakh tonnes of ore annually.

However, officials said the company dispatched only about 55,000 tonnes in the first year and 5.2 lakh tonnes in the second year, resulting in a cumulative shortfall of 10.3 lakh tonnes over the 2-year period.

Following this, officials recommended the firm forfeit its performance security. JSW Steel challenged the govt's action before the Karnataka high court and later the Supreme Court, contending that the demand was raised after more than four years and that Covid-19 restrictions and lower-than-expected ore quality hampered production.

But the SC declined a stay. Officials confirmed that Rs 127 crore was since recovered from the company through invocation of its bank guarantees. **TOI**'s attempt to seek a response from JSW Steel received no reply.

Recruitments: 50% quota cap to stay

Times News Network

Bengaluru: Facing immense pressure to fill 56,432 vacancies as promised by chief minister Siddaramaiah, the govt has decided to go ahead with recruitment adhering to 50% cap on overall reservation with the department of personnel and administrative reforms issuing an order to this effect.

The order, issued Saturday, instructs departments to begin recruitments in 30 days, based on the reservation order and 100-point roster prevailing prior to Dec 28, 2022.

This means Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) will not benefit from reservation hike introduced by the previous BJP govt. In Dec 2022, the BJP govt had increased SC and ST quota from 15% and 3% to 17% and 7% respectively.

The move breached the 50% cap on overall reservation and was challenged in the high court. Last year, the court had restrained the govt from implementing the increase in reservation under the Karnataka Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Reservation of seats in Educational Institutions and of Appointments or posts in the services under the State) Act, 2022.

However, Saturday's order asked departments to set aside an additional 2% and 4% jobs for SCs and STs, subject to the high court's final order.

Meanwhile, pressure has mounted on the govt with hundreds of students protesting last week in Dharwad, demanding that it fill vacancies immediately. While there are some 2.4 lakh vacancies, the CM has promised to fill them in a phased manner.

However, the decision to adhere to the 50% cap has drawn criticism from Dalits, who describe it as a double setback. They say proceeding with the old roster not only denies SCs the benefit of increased quota but also puts on hold implementation of internal reservation for SCs.

Governor Thaawar Chand Gehlot recently gave his assent to the Karnataka Scheduled Castes (Sub-Classification) Bill, 2025 that breaks down the 17% quota into three subgroups: 6% (SC Left), 6% (SC Right), and 5% (Others).

Finish line in sight as 71cr land record pages go digital

Santoshkumar.B @timesofindia.com

Bengaluru: The govt's ambitious drive to digitise more than 100 crore pages of land records is nearing completion, with over 71 crore pages already scanned and archived, the revenue department said.

BHU SURAKSHA

The exercise has been completed in 102 taluk offices, while work in the remaining 134 taluks is in the final stages and is expected to be wrapped up by June-end. The project, titled Bhu Suraksha, launched in July 2025, aims to make land records easily accessible to citizens. Under the initiative, people can apply for land documents online from their homes and download certified copies, reducing their dependence on revenue offices.

Revenue minister Krishna Byre Gowda said the project has eliminated the need for the public to visit offices and wait for weeks to obtain certified land documents, significantly improving transparency and efficiency in land record management.

"Some taluks have more than one crore pages of documents, which has slowed the process," Gowda said. He said earlier farmers encountered problems as many records were lost, and some records were being illegally altered. Digitisation could also prevent several illegal activities.

TOI

REMOVING HASSLES: File picture of revenue minister Krishna Byre Gowda at the inauguration of Bhu Suraksha Yojane in Bengaluru. Under the initiative, people can apply for land documents online from their homes and download certified copies, reducing their dependence on revenue offices

Officials said all land records in taluk, assistant commissioners' (AC) and deputy commissioners' (DC) offices would be scanned. "We had initially set March end as the deadline, but the number of documents is more than anticipated," said Rajender Kumar Kataria, additional chief secretary of the revenue department. "Once digitisation is completed, we can take policy decisions."

52 lakh pages accessed

Revenue department data till Friday (Feb 27) showed that over 1.7 crore pages in DC offices, 2.1 crore pages in AC offices and 67.3 crore pages in taluk offices had been scanned and uploaded online.

Till Friday, the public accessed over 52 lakh pages of scanned records. Of these, around 16 lakh pages were downloaded online, while over 36 lakh pages were obtained from taluk office counters and about 21,000 pages from Nadakacheri centres.

Of the 102 taluk offices that have completed digitisation are Magadi and Harohalli in Bengaluru South district, Devanahalli in Bengaluru Rural district, Chikkaballapur, Gidibande and Manchenahalli in Chikkaballapur district, Kolar, Malur and KGF in Kolar district, and Sira in Tumakuru district. Among AC offices, only Chikkamagaluru has completed digitising documents so far.

Elephant kills PU student, mother escapes narrowly

Times News Network

Madikeri: A 19-year-old girl who had come home for post-exam holidays was attacked and killed by an elephant at Bettathur near Madikeri on Saturday evening. Her mother, who was walking next to her, had a narrow escape.

AT MADIKERI

Police said Pujya, 19, completed I PU exams at Madikeri's St Michael's College and returned home at Bettathur on Feb 23. Her mother Devakki works as a cook at a govt residential school in Karike. On Saturday, the mother and daughter came to Cherambane from Karike and headed home in Bettathur. Father Changappa came to pick up the duo on his bike and headed to Bettathur. As they reached near the house on the bike, three of them could not go uphill, following which Changappa asked his wife and daughter to get down and walk home.

Just then, a wild elephant appeared out of nowhere and attacked the teenager. Though Changappa rushed to the spot following an alarm, it was too late. Pujya was declared dead at the district hospital, police said.

641 stolen cellphones recovered via ID register

Bengaluru: East Division police recovered around 641 stolen mobile phones, worth Rs 1.6 crore, between Jan and Feb 28, using the Central Equipment Identity Register (CEIR). The recovered phones were returned to their owners on Saturday at Indiranagar during the monthly public grievance meeting, presided over by police commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh.

Police said CEIR is a software tool that detects the use of stolen mobile phones through their IMEI and sim card numbers.

As part of a special operation, East Division police coordinated across multiple stations — including Halasuru, Byappanahalli, Indiranagar, Banaswadi, Hennur, Govindapura, DJ Halli, KG Halli, Ramamurthynagar, JB Nagar, Pulakeshinagar, Bharathi Nagar, Commercial Street, and Shivajinagar — to trace and recover the 641 stolen devices. TNN

SI, 58, collapses during 5k run, dies

Times News Network

Mangaluru: SI Nasir Hussain, 58, attached to Kundapura Rural police station, collapsed and died while taking part in the 5km 'Karnataka Police Run' in Udupi Sunday morning.

The event, organised by the Udupi district police under the theme 'Our Police, Our Pride', aimed to promote physical fitness, a drug-free Karnataka, and cyber awareness. Hussain hailed from Chikkamagalur district and had served in various police stations in Udupi district.

Police said he collapsed near the taluk panchayat office after the run began from Mahatma Gandhi district stadium. He was rushed to a nearby hospital, where doctors declared him dead. It is suspected that he suffered a cardiac arrest.

He is survived by his wife and two children.

Mosque covered with curtain during shobhayatra

Times News Network

Bagalkot: In light of the Hindu convention, the Pankha mosque in the Killa area in Bagalkot was covered with a cloth on Sunday as a precautionary measure.

A grand Hindu convention was organised at the city's Basaveshwar ground. Before the convention, scheduled for 6pm, a procession was set to pass in front of the mosque, prompting police to cover the building with a cloth. Police vans and a significant number of personnel were deployed at the site.

It is reported that a similar approach of covering mosques was followed during communal riots in Hyderabad. The shobhayatra started from Venkateshwar temple, and it was inaugurated by performing puja of a cow. Activists led by MP PC Gaddigoudar, Rajya Sabha member Narayanasa Bhandage, MLCs PH Pujar and Hanamant Nirani, and former MLA Veeranna Charantimath passed the mosque. Troupes such as Dollu Kunita, Halage Mela, Karadi Majalu, and children participated in the event. The route was decorated with rangoli and buntings.

TOI

Pankha mosque in Killa area in Bagalkot covered with a cloth Sunday

No untoward incident

No untoward incident was reported. On Feb 19, during the Shivaji Jayanti procession in front of the Pankha mosque, incidents of stone pelting and slipper being thrown occurred. Eight people were arrested in connection with the incident.

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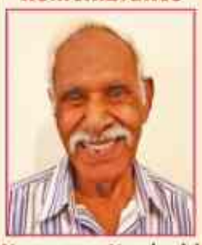

Narayanan Nambudri
15.04.1940 - 02.03.2023

Though three years have passed, your love, care, wisdom, blessings, and guidance remain in our hearts forever. We cherish you always and miss you every moment.

Fondly remembered by:
Indira, Raj, Hema, Nanditha, Vinod, Seema and Siddhartha.
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TIMES NATION

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | MONDAY, MARCH 2, 2026

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Tip from **neha.saini1**@timesinternet

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Shadow on Surat diamond trade

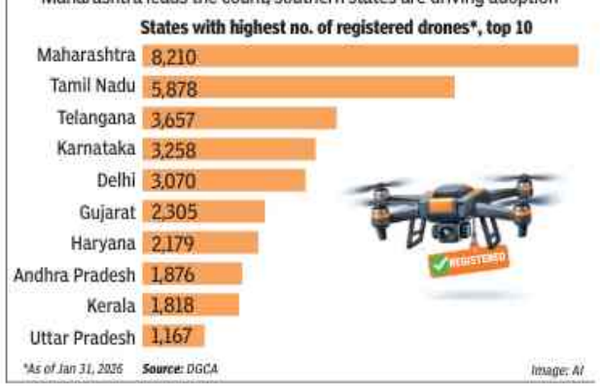
Diamond traders with operations in Dubai have expressed concern after missile attacks on the Gulf trade hub following the major strike on Iran launched by Israel and the US, raising fears of disruption to business and trade. Traders in Surat said the immediate fallout has been the suspension of flight operations which is expected to slow or temporarily halt the movement of people and consignments linked to the diamond sector, reports **Yagnesh Mehta**.

STATISTICS A slice of life in numbers

Looking for drones? Try southern skies

Number of registered drones in India is now a little shy of 40,000, with use catching on across industry, agriculture and surveillance sectors. While Maharashtra leads the count, southern states are driving adoption

States with highest no. of registered drones*, top 10



*As of Jan 31, 2026 **Source:** DGCA Image: AI

PM reviews West Asia situation, evacuation after attacks subside

Govt Asks Indians In Iran, Gulf Region To Exercise Utmost Caution

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: External affairs minister S Jaishankar had spoken to his counterparts from all GCC countries — Kuwait, Bahrain, the UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Oman — by late Sunday evening to share India's concerns over the rapidly deteriorating security situation in the Gulf and to discuss the well-being of the Indian community in the region.

PM Narendra Modi also took stock of the West Asia situation at a Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) meeting late Sunday after his return to Delhi. The CCS is the highest decision-making body on issues relating to national security and defence.

However, with airspace closed across the region, and road travel deemed unsafe, govt advised Indian nationals in Iran and other places in the Gulf region to exercise utmost caution and follow local security guidance.

PM Modi with Union ministers Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh and Nirmala Sitharaman, NSA Ajit Doval, Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, foreign secretary Vikram Misri and others during the CCS meeting

Evacuation in any case is going to be a complex affair with nearly 10 million Indians spread across the Gulf countries. India is hoping the aerial attacks will subside in the next few days, even though they intensified on Sunday with the killing of Iran's supreme leader Ali Khamenei.

The Indian embassy in the UAE confirmed that an Indian national had been injured in an Iranian strike but added that the person was out of danger and receiving assistance from hospital authorities.

Meanwhile, the Iranian embassy in India called upon "independent and freedom-seeking govts" around the world to condemn Khamenei's killing and to refrain from remaining silent in the face of "lawlessness and aggression".

India, however, had not expressed condolences till late in the evening. Russia and China were among a handful of countries that condemned the killing or offered their condolences. India has been forced into a delicate balancing act because of its close ties with both sides — the US-Israel combine and Iran — and this reflected in its call on Saturday for restraint and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states.

The Iranian embassy here said the US and Israel will have to endure the "grave consequences of this unforgivable crime". "The proud nation of Iran, as always, will continue on its noble path with strength, resilience and determination. No disruption shall be permitted in the ongoing affairs of the country," it said.

Flyers vent it out on social media

Priyangi.Agarwal@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Airspace closures over parts of West Asia continued to disrupt flight operations, leading to the cancellation of 104 flights to and from Delhi on Sunday.

Delhi airport wrote on X that due to the ongoing political developments in West Asia, west-bound international flights may face delays or scheduled adjustments. "Passengers are strongly encouraged to contact their respective airlines for the latest flight information before heading to the airport," it added.

Many passengers took to their social media handles to say that they were stranded at Delhi airport.

An airport official said: "At least 104 flights, including 62 departures and 42 arrivals, were cancelled until Sunday evening. Most of them were cancelled on Saturday, and passengers were intimated in advance."

As many airspaces remained closed, several flights, including domestic ones, were delayed. According to FlightRadar24, the live flight tracking website, over 300 flights, including around 250 arrivals, were delayed at Delhi airport. The average delay time for arrivals was nearly 25 minutes.

Apart from West Asia, flights to and from Delhi were impacted on other routes such as London, Birmingham, Zurich, Amsterdam, Milan, Vienna, Frankfurt, Copenhagen, Chicago, New York and Paris.

Harsh, a passenger whose Delhi-Toronto flight via Doha was cancelled on Saturday, wrote on X, "I haven't received any rescheduled flight until now. Please reschedule my flight ASAP as I am stuck here at the airport in Delhi."

Gordon Dimmack, who was travelling to England after arriving from Phuket, was among the passengers stranded in Delhi for over 24 hours. In a series of posts on X, Dimmack said the bombing began shortly after they landed in Delhi, following which passengers were asked to get off the aircraft after waiting for nearly three hours. He described the terminal as "chaotic". He and his wife eventually slept on bean bags that were provided only after screaming at airline staff, he said.

"After nearly 20 hours stuck at this airport, all we had been given to eat was one egg sandwich, two tiny bottles of water, and a bottle of foul-tasting juice," he said, adding that another sandwich was later provided.

In another update posted on Sunday evening, Dimmack said the situation was gradually improving, with airline staff beginning to reroute passengers on alternative flights, and he was returning to Thailand. Another X user, in a series of posts, claimed that his daughter and son-in-law were stuck at Delhi airport after their flight to Tel Aviv was diverted to Delhi. "Their port of origin is Jammu. They are getting mixed responses from the staff for tickets to Jammu," the user said.

Air travel crippled as almost 2k flights cancel operations

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Air travel remained severely crippled in West Asia — from the UAE to Israel — with around 1,600 flights cancelled by the region's airlines like Emirates, Etihad and Qatar Airways till Sunday evening across all global routes. Indian carriers like IndiGo, Air India and Akasa cancelled 350 flights during the day, according to the aviation ministry.

Most airlines have already announced cancellations till Monday. Resumption depends on when carriers deem flights to be safe in the war-zone.

Indian carriers like IndiGo, Air India and Akasa cancelled 350 flights during the day

Late Sunday, however, Air India announced "flights to North America and Europe will operate using alternative routes over available airspaces in West Asia which is expected to add to the flying times". In a statement, it added, "Flights to New York (JFK) and Newark (Liberty International) will operate with technical stops at Rome (Fiumicino Airport)."

With Pakistan airspace closed for Indian carriers, they can't fly Pakistan-Afghanistan-CIS to the west — the route followed by Lufthansa and other western airlines.

Air India cancelled around 125 international flights to and from the West on Sunday. The Tatas-owned carrier made it clear that it has extended suspension of flights to and from the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Israel and Qatar until 11.59 pm on March 2. "Additionally, select flights to Europe scheduled on March 2 have been cancelled, along with the scheduled return legs of these flights (AI117: Amritsar-Birmingham; AI151/AI152: Delhi to and from Zurich; AI157/AI158: Delhi to and from Copenhagen and AI114 Birmingham-Delhi."

IndiGo also announced "suspension of select international flights that use West Asia airspace until March 2, 2026, 11.59pm IST".

For most airlines, the first priority is to get aircraft and crew stuck at foreign airports back home. Air India completed that task for its wide-body aircraft on Sunday and is looking at operating Europe, UK and North America (US, Canada with fuelling stops in Vienna or Rome) through the oceanic route in Oman's south, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Ditto on the way back.

Abu Dhabi has taken an exceptional step by asking its hotels to extend stays of guests stuck due to flight cancellations. "The cost of the extended stay will be covered by DCT," its department of culture and tourism (DCT) said in a circular.

Some stranded Indians are looking at driving from the UAE to Muscat and then flying home from there. However, the Indian embassy in Muscat issued an advisory on Sunday that "prior visit/tourist visa (e-visa) is required to enter Oman".

Indians holding valid visa or residence permit from the US, UK, Canada, Japan, or Schengen countries can apply for on-arrival visa, it said.

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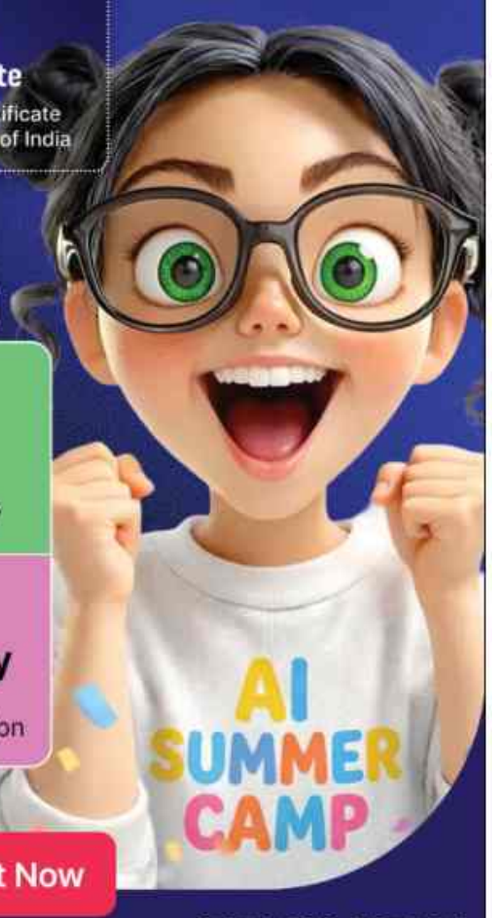

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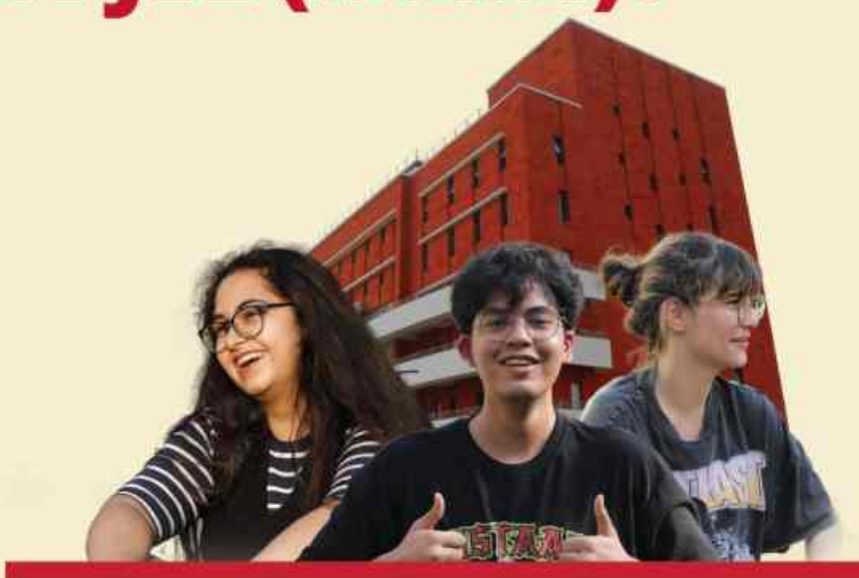

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Counting pills, fearing blasts: Indians stranded in West Asia

'Hotel Rooms Are Costing ₹15,000-20,000 A Night Per Person'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Neeru Garg and her husband counted pills and hours. Their Sharjah return flight vanished. A taxi ride brought them to Dubai — and into a city under missile fire. "We have no money left and are running low on essential medicines," Garg, a college principal from Punjab's Bathinda, said Sunday from the home of an Indian doctor where they found shelter. "We don't know where to go."

Across west Asia, thousands of Indians — tourists, expatriates, pilgrims, politicians and families with children — have been left stranded after US-Israel strikes on Iran triggered Iranian retaliation. This in turn forced mass airspace closures and shutting down Dubai, the world's busiest transit hub. "We were asked to leave the airport without any help," Garg said.

Air travel disruptions deepened the crisis. Indian carriers cancelled about 350 flights Sunday alone, while west Asia-based airlines scrubbed more than 1,600 services across their networks. Airports from Chennai and Jaipur to Mangaluru and Amritsar reported mass cancellations to Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Doha and Jeddah.

Passengers stranded by the closure of Dubai International Airport await for assistance in the airport parking lot, Sunday

Bhojegowda, travelling from Johannesburg to India via Dubai with his family, said the shutdown came without warning. "As soon as we reached Dubai airport, it was conveyed to us that all flights were grounded due to air strikes by Iran," he said in a video message, adding that they were safe but stuck.

Amarnath, who was in Dubai for an award event, said guests received repeated safety alerts. "We were advised not to stand near windows. All flights cancelled."

"Hotel rooms were costing Rs 15,000 to Rs 20,000 a night per person. We couldn't afford it and had no place to go," one relative said. State MLAs later arranged accommodation for the group in service quarters near the airport. In Kolkata, actor Subhasree Ganguly's husband, film director and Trinamool MLA Raj Chakraborty, said she could hear missile blasts from her hotel. "As a husband and father, I am extremely anxious."

Pieu Mukherjee, visiting her newborn granddaughter in Abu Dhabi, described nights punctuated by explosions. "The sound of bombs is so loud that windows shake. The baby and my five-year-old granddaughter are terrified," she said.

Two friends from Salt Lake, Upasana Sinha and Konina Biswas, said they saw interceptor missiles streak across the sky while driving back to Abu Dhabi. "Hotel prices became nearly ten times higher overnight. Some rooms are quoting close to Rs 1 lakh a night," Sinha said. Pilgrims were among the worst hit. Umrah groups from Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh were turned back from Jeddah airport after hours of waiting. Many had prepared for short stays and ran out of money and medicines.

"They were kept standing for three to four hours and then told the airport is closed," said Ahmedabad MLA Imran Khedawala, who appealed to the Centre for help. "Women and children are stuck without cash or medicines."

In Kendrapada district of Odisha, families anxiously followed war updates as plumbers working in Israel, Bahrain and Dubai described seeking shelter amid explosions. "We could hear blasts a few km away. We were petrified," said Biswabhanu Das from Bahrain, urging evacuation.

State govts said they were coordinating with New Delhi. Tamil Nadu activated a control room and helplines, urging residents abroad to follow embassy advisories. Odisha said it was in touch with the Centre to track workers and pilgrims.

Abu Dhabi asked hotels to extend stays for travellers, with costs to be covered by local authorities. Some Indians explored travelling overland to Oman to fly home, though visa restrictions complicated plans. In Iran, contact snapped with a tiny Indian community in Tehran, including fewer than 100 Sikhs.

Khamenei killing sparks protests in Kashmir, Ladakh, several UP cities

Srinagar/Lucknow: Shia protests swept Kashmir valley, Ladakh, and several UP cities Sunday after Iran's Ayatollah Khamenei was killed in a US–Israeli strike, triggering street demonstrations, large-scale mourning gatherings and sharp political reactions across regions.

J&K, however, shut educational institutions for two days as a precaution.

At Srinagar's Lal Chowk, thousands converged around the Clock Tower, shouting anti-US and anti-Israel slogans. Black and red flags were raised, chests beaten in grief, and portraits of Khamenei and his predecessor Ayatollah Khomeini displayed.

PDP legislators Aga Syed Muntazir Mehdi and Waheed Parra joined protesters. It marked the largest Kashmir valley mobilisation since Article 370 was scrapped in 2019.

Demonstrations spread to Budgam, south and north Kashmir. In Ladakh's Kargil district, a Shia stronghold, thousands assembled in the main market.

OUTRAGE: Shia Muslim women protest in Srinagar over killing of Khamenei on Sunday

Kashmir's chief priest Mirwaiz Umar Farooq urged a peaceful voluntary shutdown. CM Omar Abdullah said his govt was coordinating with the ministry of external affairs to ensure safety of J&K residents, including students, in Iran. Former CM Mehbooba Mufti described the day as one of mourning for the Muslim world, while People's Conference chief Sajad Lone described the murder as something that was deeply distressing.

In Lucknow, thousands of Shias marched through streets as clerics denounced the strike. Maulana Kalbe Jawwad called the death a tragedy for Islam, and announced three days of mourning and a candle march at Chhota Imambara.

Maulana Yasoob Abbas said effigies of US President Donald Trump and Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu would be burnt. Islamic Centre of India chief. Khalid Rasheed Farangi Mahali called for international intervention, alleging civilian casualties, while urging communal harmony.

Across western UP — Agra, Aligarh, Muzaffarnagar, Amroha, Shamli and Saharanpur — Shia mourners in black staged marches, some joined by Sunnis. In Muzaffarnagar, protesters marched from Kidwai Nagar imambara to Fakkar Shah Chowk and submitted a memorandum to local authorities. Agra saw slogans and prayers outside Shaheed-e-Salis Mosque.

In Mumbai, Shias and Iranian expatriates held a condolence meet at Masjid-e-Iranian in Dongri. "We pray for peace and normalcy in Iran and west Asia," said Ali Namazi of the mosque committee, which was sparked by concerns over weak internet links and relatives' safety.

Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan condemned Khamenei's killing, calling the US and Israel "rogue nations" with "insane" actions. In a letter to PM Narendra Modi, he urged Centre to ensure protection of Indians and prepare them for evacuation. TNN

Oil tanker carrying 15 Indians, 5 Iranians attacked near Oman coast, 4 crew injured

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Amid the US-Iran conflict, an oil tanker, reportedly carrying 15 Indians among its 20 crew members, came under attack near the Strait of Hormuz. Four mariners were injured.

Oman's Maritime Security Centre confirmed that oil tanker Skylight — flying the flag of Palau — was targeted about 5 nautical miles north of Khasab Port. It wasn't clear who attacked the tanker in the strait, which accounts for about one-fifth of the world's oil flow

There were 20 crew members, including five Iranians, on the ship. According to initial information reported by the Times of Oman, four crew members suffered injuries of varying severity and were transferred to medical facilities. No death was reported. "All 20 crew members, including 15 Indian nationals and five Iranian nationals, were evacuated," the centre said in a statement. In Dec 2025, the US Treasury sanctioned Red Sea Ship Management and Skylight, among other vessels, accusing the management company and its owner of operating a "shadow fleet" to transport Iranian petroleum products in the Gulf. Ship monitoring service Tankertrackers.com described Skylight as a small tanker that was mostly used for fuelling other vessels and had been anchored in Oman's Musandam Governorate since Feb 22.

Reuters

A video grab of burning oil tanker Skylight after the attack, about 5 nautical miles north of Khasab Port, Oman

Two ships, including Skylight, were attacked in the strait on Sunday, maritime security agencies said. Another was struck off the UAE coast, said UKMTO and private maritime security company Vanguard Tech.

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps has stated that the strait is effectively closed to international navigation and warned vessels to stay away. Three vessels operated by Pakistan National Shipping Corporation were stopped Sunday by Iran from proceeding towards the strait, the ARY News reported.

Priyanka: Iran leader's killing 'despicable'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Sunday said the targetted assassination of the leadership of a sovereign nation is "despicable" and deserves "strong condemnation.

She alleged "the so-called leaders of the democratic world" were the orchestrators of the murder of the supreme leader of Iran Ali Khamenei.

The Congress MP also accused Indian PM Narendra Modi of "genuflecting before the Israel PM and US President".

Congress termed the Modi govt's response to the war on Iran and its silence on Khamenei killing as a "betrayal of India's values, principles and interests", She also added that the country was paying a hefty price for the substance and style of PM Narendra Modi's foreign policy.

Congress MP Priyanka termed it "tragic" that multiple nations have been dragged into the conflict. "The world needs peace, not more unnecessary wars," she said, recalling Mahatma Gandhi's words that "an eye for an eye makes the whole world blind".

Chinese & Russian defence systems in Iran under scrutiny

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New Delhi: The collapse of Iran's key military infrastructure following coordinated US-Israel airstrikes since Saturday has raised a question mark over the performance of Tehran's air defence network, constituted of a mix of old Russian S300 missile system, Chinese-origin HQ-9B surface-to-air missile system and some domestic systems like Bavar-373.

While the Russian S-300 is a Cold War-era system that is still widely used by several countries, the HQ-9B air defence system was recently procured by Iran from China to boost its missile defence arsenal. However, this will be the second time that the Chinese HQ-9B has failed to foil aerial attacks after last year's Operation Sindoor when Pakistan was unable to thwart India's airstrikes. HQ-9B, inspired by Russian S-300PMU and American Patriot PAC-2 systems, is a fully indigenous air defence system developed by China. It was first tested in 2006 and has been in use for the past decade. According to multiple reports, its range is 260 km. It is known to be operational in sensitive regions, like Beijing, Tibet, Xinjiang and the South China Sea.

DEFENCE DOUBTS

Based on multiple reports, Chinese HQ-9B and Russian-supplied air defence systems failed to effectively counter US-Israel aerial attacks through the most advanced and stealth fighter jets, including F35 Lightning II jets, due to a combination of sophisticated suppression techniques, lack of system integration and advanced electronic warfare.

The US and Israel jets and swarm drones reportedly targeted air defence radars and command networks , rendering the Russian and Chinese missile defence systems blind.

Shia Muslims' bid to lay siege to US consulate thwarted

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: Tension prevailed in the city on Sunday afternoon after members of the Tamil Nadu Shia Muslim Jamath and a few political party leaders, including VCK president Thol Thirumavalavan, attempted to march towards and lay siege to the US Consulate in Anna Salai, demanding that the US halt its attacks on Iran.

Police detained 200 protesters and housed them in community halls. Traffic from Royapettah govt hospital along Peters Road was temporarily suspended due to the protest. The demonstration was organised condemning the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and urging an end to the war. They marched from Royapettah hospital to New College, raising slogans against the US and Israel. In addition to the regular security arrangements, more than 250 police personnel were stationed around the US consulate in view of the protest.

Addressing reporters during the march, Thirumavalavan said a large number of Tamils work in Gulf and that India should not remain silent on the issue. He said the US and Israel were paving the way for a global conflict. He said they would organize demonstrations in the state on March 3.

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SANTOSH DESAI

A pinch of salt can change the world. While that statement may be just a wee bit exaggerated, it carries more than a dash of truth. We cannot imagine food without seasoning, even though it is clear that, strictly speaking, food does not need seasoning. Evolution did not deem it necessary to add spices to our food; it is something we have added to it. The taste inherent in food is meant to be good enough; in any case, hunger is an instinct that is far deeper than our need for taste.

And yet, we have embraced the idea of seasoning so completely today that it is impossible to think about food without sugar, salt, spices and flavouring. Particularly so in India where blandness in food is anathema.

Our passion for seasoning suggests that the quest for pleasure over necessity is a fundamental human drive. We don't need seasoning to stay alive, much like a house doesn't absolutely need windows for it to qualify as shelter. And yet, we are clear that utility alone is not enough; it must make room for more complex human impulses. We are driven to add meaning to the necessary and to extract poetry out of prose.

What is striking about the transformation is the asymmetry between input and outcome. Tiny additions, a pinch of salt, a mysterious combination of spices, a dash of herbs changes the experience of eating radically. So much taste delivered through such few milligrams of substance. The tail wags the dog ferociously in this case.

Conceptually, seasoning acts as an intensifier of food while not really being food itself. Seasoning is edible, of course, but it isn't quite food. It is a magic drizzle of specific flavours and tastes. It heightens taste notes and adds new ones to turn the substance of food into something nature had not intended it to be. Seasoning is the little trick up our sleeve, a murmur of cheating against nature. It is interesting how we find the richest meaning at the margins.

This human need can be seen elsewhere — in cave paintings, dance and music. The desire to adorn, to underline our presence in a way that went beyond the imperatives of evolution. Things that felt superfluous but became defining for human beings. Seasoning is to cooking what music is to sound.

This pattern of finding meaning in enhancement rather than essence plays out in more mundane domains of human experience. Think of how we dress up formal communication with pleasantries and social niceties, technically unnecessary for conveying information, but essential for making human interaction palatable. Or consider how we embellish our homes with objects that serve no practical purpose but make the space feel more 'lived in', more ours. Or even take the little designs and colours that everyday objects come adorned with. Little signs of seasoning that hitch a ride in purely utilitarian things.

Our passion for seasoning suggests that the quest for pleasure over necessity is a fundamental human drive. We don't need seasoning to stay alive, much like a house doesn't absolutely need windows for it to qualify as shelter

It is interesting that evolution has not deemed it necessary to make food itself self-sufficiently tasty. It is unlike sex, which has co-located with pleasure to ensure that the human race continues. But the other essentials of life, like food, water and air, have been left unembellished, presumably because we are hardwired to seek these. Seen this way, seasoning's role is to make food sensual, giving it an erotic dimension that evolution reserved for reproduction alone.

The transformation of the raw to the cooked was an act of culture. The transformation of the cooked to the seasoned is an act of refinement. It converts the universal into the particular, translates substance into style. The impulse to season food appears to be universal across cultures, but the specific vocabulary of seasoning is intensely local. In India, where it is popularly said that food changes every hundred kilometres, what changes most is the seasoning.

The effect produced by seasoning suggests something profound about meaning often emerges not through radical transformation but through thoughtful enhancement. It imagines change as making a thing more like what it was meant to be, than like something else.

In a world obsessed with efficiency, where we try to trim the fat in as many parts of our lives as possible, it is instructive to remember the value that gets added to our lives through the apparently unnecessary. Seasoning it is a testament to how we consistently choose to make life more interesting than it needs to be, how we find ways to insert meaning and pleasure into the cracks between necessity and survival. It is the bit humans add of themselves; if cooking is culture, seasoning is selfhood.

There is an avatar of seasoning that is not content with being self-effacing. The tadka is seasoning at its most theatrical, arriving with sizzle and smoke. It comes at the end of cooking after the main dish has been conjured up and proceeds to devastate its decorum by adding a layer of bite. Here, seasoning is not demure or shy; it seeks to transform, not modify and does so with attitude.

It is clear that for human survival is not enough. We need to make survival interesting. Perhaps our brains need their pound of flesh; they do not let the body's needs limit what it means to be human. In some ways, our need for seasoning tells us we need beauty, art and the occasional sizzle in our lives. Not as an indulgence, but as proof that we are human.

santosh365@gmail.com

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Kejriwal targets Modi over question paper leaks, air pollution, graft in Guj

▶Continued from page 1

Kejriwal thanked the judge for his "bold verdict" delivered amid an "atmosphere of fear". The case was monitored at every step to politically target AAP functionaries and dismantle the party, Kejriwal alleged. Challenging his political opponents, he said during his tenure as CM, he had signed numerous files, but no contractor or vendor could claim he ever demanded a bribe. "I earned my honesty," he said, adding he will quit politics if anyone could prove otherwise.

Kejriwal said that in 2014, people of the country voted Congress out of the Centre, hoping for change, and gave a full majority to Modi. However, after 12 years, every sector, including airlines, railways, banks, education and healthcare, is in decline, he claimed, adding that roads are broken, water is contaminated and power supply disrupted, both across India and in Delhi. He said that the AAP rally signalled the countdown of BJP's removal from office.

Senior functionaries, including former ministers Manish Sisodia, Atishi, Satyendar Jain and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh, were present. A banner displayed at the venue read, "Ek saal, Dilli behaal — yaad aa rahe Kejriwal," echoing the party's claim that the capital has deteriorated within a year of BJP coming to office in Delhi, and people are already missing the tenure of Kejriwal as chief minister.

ANI

AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal along with other party functionaries addressing a rally at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi, Sunday

Citing alleged unfulfilled promises of the BJP govt in the city, Kejriwal accused it of failing to deliver Rs 2,500 per month to women and of not regularising bus marshals despite assurances. He claimed that thousands of marshals, DTC drivers and conductors, mohalla clinic staff and other employees were removed from service. During a period of high inflation, govt took away existing employment instead of creating jobs, he said.

Kejriwal also targeted Modi over issues like paper leaks in competitive exams, air pollution and alleged corruption in Gujarat. He said if the Centre is serious about ending corruption, it should act against "illegal liquor sales, drug menace and questionable land deals". He alleged that bridges and roads have been collapsing soon after inauguration and questioned the Centre's priorities.

Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann, addressing the rally via video conferencing, termed the court verdict in Kejriwal's favour a historic victory of truth in Indian politics. The AAP functionary asserted that the party is now a strong national force and said it will win 100 out of 117 seats in Punjab in the 2027 assembly elections. This will mark what he called the beginning of the end of authoritarian rule at the Centre.

Mann alleged that the Union govt is yet to release Punjab's GST dues and Rs 1,600 crore in flood relief, and said this "injustice" will be answered through a democratic mandate. "Where Punjab moves, the nation follows," he said, adding that the AAP's "struggle" was not for any individual but to safeguard the Constitution and India's democratic values.

Responding to the allegations, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said that despite getting the opportunity to govern Delhi for 11 years and now running the Punjab govt for the past three and a half years, AAP functionaries failed to develop both places.

"Yet they do not speak about that; instead, they want to question the one-year-old BJP govt in Delhi. Even after being repeatedly rejected (by people) in Gujarat and Goa, AAP seeks answers from BJP govts there," Sachdeva said.

Kejriwal guilty in the eyes of Delhi's people: CM

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New Delhi: Chief minister Rekha Gupta on Sunday hit out at Arvind Kejriwal, saying that "those shouting in his defence should understand that the pot of deceit will not be put on the stove again in Delhi."

Addressing a public gathering in Chandni Chowk, she said the AAP chief is "guilty in the eyes of Delhi's people" and will "never be forgiven".

She asserted that he should not celebrate his acquittal in the liquor policy case as the matter will now go to Delhi High Court. Instead, Kejriwal will have to answer for what she claimed were a series of scams involving classrooms in govt schools, fake labour bills, Delhi Jal Board, ED-related cases and "Sheesh Mahal".

Sharpening her attack on Arvind Kejriwal, CM Rekha Gupta said he may continue to defend himself, but he would have to face legal scrutiny

Sharpening her attack on Kejriwal, Gupta said he may continue to defend himself, but he would have to face legal scrutiny and answer all the allegations against him.

For the past 27 years, BJP had worked to safeguard Delhi and protested on the streets whenever the former govts acted against the city's interests, the CM said. Referring to governance under the previous AAP dispensation, she said schemes were launched without clarity on their ground-level implementation. She cited the Ladli Scheme as an example, alleging that its benefits did not reach 1.75 lakh girls.

She said her govt identified the beneficiaries and transferred Rs 90 crore via direct benefit transfer to 30,000 girls, and is set to transfer another Rs 100 crore to 40,000 more. The Ladli Scheme, she said, was replaced with Lakhpati Beti Yojana, under which each girl will receive Rs 1.25 lakh for education support.

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said despite getting the chance to govern Delhi for 11 years and now Punjab for the past three and a half years, AAP delivered "zero development" in both places. "Yet they (AAP functionaries) do not speak about that; instead, they want to question the one-year-old BJP govt in Delhi. Even after being repeatedly rejected in Gujarat and Goa, AAP seeks answers from BJP govts there," Sachdeva said, adding that Kejriwal keeps on blaming BJP for issues, including Israel and America.

FIR against 9 for 'defaming' Barsana Lathmar Holi

Agra: Mathura police have registered a case against nine social media users for allegedly circulating edited clips of the Lathmar Holi celebrations of Barsana and Nandgaon.

Police said the action was taken against those "who sought to defame a 5,000-year-old tradition by making partial clips of old videos of the Lathmar/Laddumar Holi of Barsana/Nandgaon viral on social media".

SP Mathura (rural) Suresh Chand Rawat said the videos came to the notice of police in which portions of earlier Holi celebrations were shared online. "When these videos were examined by the Barsana police station team, it was found that some social media influencers had edited clips from old videos of the Holi celebrations of Barsana and Nandgaon and made them viral," he said.

Based on a complaint filed by a police official, an FIR was registered on Saturday at Barsana police station under Sections 196(2) and 353(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Sections 67 and 67A of the IT Act. TNN

83 girls moved out of home after charges of physical abuse

V.Srivatsal@timesofindia.com

Trichy: Eighty-three girls from the Annai Ashram, a govt-aided home, near the Trichy airport were transferred following allegations that caretakers had physically and verbally abused the children and showed negligence in their health. The govt has also suspended subsidies for the facility.

The girls were transferred to Annai Sathya Home in Mathur and Nagammai Children's Home in KK Nagar on Saturday night. Officials said during a routine inspection to the home recently, the district administration found a girl unwell. The child complained of negligence. Subsequently, district collector V Saravanan ordered an inquiry, which was carried out for two days.

While the management of the institution claimed that the transfer of children was carried out for "administrative reasons", a senior district official said preliminary probe revealed management had verbally and physically abused the children and had been negligent in providing medical care.

Beyond houses: A community reclaims its address in Wayanad

Rajeev.KR@timesofindia.com

Wayanad: The inauguration of the Elstone Estate township in Kalpetta has provided more than just shelter to the landslide survivors — it restored a sense of identity. Chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan handed over the keys to 178 houses to displaced families on Sunday as part of the first phase of the township project.

Among those feeling a profound sense of relief is P T Velayudhan, the veteran Mundakkai postman who spent 19 months tracing scattered families across the district and delivering letters to a displaced population. For him, the new addresses represent the stitching together of a community he served for decades.

Ever since the July 30, 2024 disaster flattened homes and scattered residents across the district, the 64-year-old postman had painstakingly tracked down displaced families — many of whom moved from one rented house to another — to ensure their letters, bank papers and official communications reached them. "The landslide didn't just destroy houses; it erased people's addresses," he said.

Velayudhan continued in service even after the post office and most of the homes he served were wiped out. "The survivors were scattered across various panchayats. Whenever letters arrived, I called them. If they were within Meppadi panchayat limits, I delivered them in person. Otherwise, I redirected the mail to post offices near their rented homes," he said.

Velayudhan himself was among those who lost their homes — the house he built after years of hard work was wiped out without a trace. Now, he has been allotted a new house in the township project — and with it, a permanent address.

He expressed relief that after nearly two years of uncertainty, the people of Mundakkai and Chooralmala — including himself — would finally have a place to call their own. Postal services in the township, however, will be handled by the Kalpetta post office. The families will have to update their Aadhaar and other official records once they move into their new homes, he said.

The township has restored more than just shelter for many survivors too. "I lost nine members of my family, including my parents, sister and her child. Today is a new beginning in our lives, but the sorrow remains that our loved ones are not here with us," said Bijoy P B, one of the beneficiaries.

Photo: TOI

The house allotted to P T Velayudhan, the Mundakkai postman, who also lost his house in the landslide. He had spent 19 months tracing scattered families across the district

> The landslide didn't just destroy houses; it erased people's addresses... The survivors were scattered across panchayats. Whenever letters arrived, I called them. If they were within Meppadi panchayat limits, I delivered them in person. Else, I redirected the mail
>
> —P T VELAYUDHAN

Water break saves Andhra man from biggest cracker blast

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Vetlapalem (Kakinada): A water break saved **Chappala Samuel** from ending up charred beyond recognition when a high-intensity blast ripped through a firecracker unit at Vetlapalem village in Kakinanda district on Saturday afternoon.

While the explosion killed 21 people and left several others battling for life in ICU, Samuel escaped with minor injuries, and he believes it was "divine intervention".

Moments before the tragedy — the biggest of its kind in Andhra Pradesh in recent memory — the 30-year-old father of three stood up to drink water when he felt tremors and saw fire.

Instincts kicked in and Samuel ran for his life, collapsing in a nearby paddy field where he lay unconscious for nearly half an hour.

As flames and smoke billowed out of the firecracker manufacturing unit, and a chaotic aftermath unfolded, many presumed he too was dead.

Key Red corridor crumbles as 15 Naxals surrender in Chhattisgarh

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Raipur: Fifteen Maoists, including state committee member Vikas alias Sudarshan alias Rajanna (57) carrying a reward of Rs 25 lakh, surrendered along with their automatic weapons before police in Chhattisgarh's Mahasamund district early Sunday.

The surrender of nine women and six men, collectively carrying a bounty of Rs 73 lakh, has dealt a decisive blow to CPI (Maoist) western subzonal structure active along Chhattisgarh-Odisha border.

Vikas, a crucial figure in the Bargarh–Balangir–Mahasamund (BBM) divisional setup, surrendered with an AK-47 rifle.

Two CRPF men injured in Maoist blast, firing in Jharkhand

An assistant commandant of CRPF's CoBRA unit sustained critical leg injuries in a Maoist IED blast, while a jawan of the paramilitary suffered gunshot wounds during a combing operation in Saranda forest in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum on Sunday. Following the IED blast, the injured assistant commandant, Ajay Mallick, was shifted to the camp for medical treatment, and the combing operation resumed. Soon after, Maoists hiding in the forest opened fire, in which a CRPF jawan was injured. Intermittent firing from both sides continued until evening. Both injured personnel were airlifted to Ranchi and later air-dashed to New Delhi, where they are stable. TNN

The group walked out of the forest late on Saturday, days after writing to home minister Vijay Sharma expressing their desire to surrender. A bus was sent to pick them up, along with their weapons, from the forest area and bring them to Mahasamund district headquarters, police said.

Security forces recovered 14 weapons, including three AK-47 rifles, two SLRs, two INSAS rifles, four .303 rifles, and three 12-bore guns.

Officials said the surrender was facilitated through sustained outreach under the state's rehabilitation policy, including appeals via radio, posters, and direct contact with cadres. The surrendered Maoists were welcomed with copies of the Constitution, the tricolour, and symbolic gestures of reintegration.

Police said that with the disbanding of the BBM divisional structure, the western sub-zone of Odisha state committee has effectively collapsed, making parts of both Raipur police range in Chhattisgarh and the Sambalpur range in Odisha largely free of Maoist presence.

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AI-assisted question papers at IIMs to reduce faculty workload

While ensuring speed, consistency and scalability, AI-driven assessments run the risk of over-rewarding well-written but shallow answers

Rajlakshmi.Ghosh
@timesofindia.com

Image generated by AI

With AI transforming every aspect of education, it is now reshaping the question paper setting system. At the IIMs, AI-assisted question papers are gradually redefining assessment practices, introducing efficiencies in content generation, difficulty calibration, and pattern analysis. It may be an enabler, but questions on credibility of question paper continue to surface. IIM Nagpur is the first to announce the use of AI to set question papers.

"AI setting question papers is technically feasible and can be academically sound — but genuineness in assessment is not merely about correctness. A meaningful question paper tests judgment, synthesis, ethical reasoning, and contextual understanding. AI can generate drafts efficiently, but human faculty must curate, contextualise, and ensure alignment with learning outcomes," says Prof Debashis Chatterjee, director, IIM Kozhikode.

For B-schools, the larger impact is transformative rather than disruptive. "If AI can easily answer conventional theoretical questions, we must redesign evaluation itself, moving towards open-book exams, live case analysis, simulations, and experiential assessments that test what machines cannot easily replicate, that is, originality, leadership judgment, and decision-making under uncertainty," he adds.

Prompt Response

The use of AI in question paper setting starts with faculty members giving suitable prompts to a Large Language Model (LLM). They need to specify the topics and expectations for each question, include scenarios to be created and case details if any, and instructions to avoid repetition across past question papers. "With an AI-enabled system, question papers can also be calibrated. The faculty, while giving the necessary prompts to the AI system, will feed curriculum details, set boundaries, and define contexts. A blend of AI and human judgment will create the final question paper, to ensure conceptual validity while preventing factually incorrect items from being included," says Prof Bhimaraya Metri, director, IIM Nagpur.

AI can generate a question paper in a matter of seconds as opposed to the earlier 2-3 days it took for the task. "This will enable faculty to focus more on research and innovation," he adds. At IIM Nagpur, AI's use in assessment was inevitable to stay ahead of the curve, as the current business landscape has become more dynamic and volatile, says Prof Metri.

Notably, key institutions are not resisting AI; they are adapting it thoughtfully. "At IIM Kozhikode, we have constituted a Task Force on AI to proactively explore AI-driven approaches across teaching and learning, research, and administration. It will invite and support pilot projects at the level of students, faculty, programmes, and the institution, apart from developing guiding principles for evaluating these pilots in alignment with our institutional ethos. After one year, a comprehensive AI policy will be proposed. The goal is not automation for its own sake. It is augmentation — using AI as a co-pilot while preserving academic wisdom, ethical standards, and human discernment," says Prof Chatterjee.

Excessive dependence on AI has a flipside, as it may reduce the creative and analytical depth that professors bring to the classroom. "The originality, contextual relevance and hallucination identification can only be done by faculty as these require domain expertise," says Prof MP Sebastian, dean-Faculty Admin & Development, IIM Kozhikode. He elaborates, "If the strengths of AI assessment include speed, consistency and scalability, its weaknesses include the risk of over-rewarding well-written but shallow answers, low-rewarding disruptive thinking, and possible struggles with originality beyond the training patterns."

Humans vs AI Application

- **Irreplaceable:** Original thought evaluation, contextual judgment, value-based trade-offs, unconventional answers, and original research argumentation
- **Replaceable:** MCQs, structured problem-solving, cryptographic calculations, code evaluation, objective rubric-based essays and large-scale certification exams

NPS Super 4 students felicitated by Global Math education leader for winning Math Olympiad

The Talent Scholar, a structured after-school online programme, opened to learners across backgrounds and designed for students from classes III to VIII, is credited for the results

School students of NPS Super 4 group secured 106 medals—including six perfect scores—at the recently concluded American Mathematics Olympiad (AMO). The students accounted for nearly a third of the 20 perfect scores recorded globally in the competition. This drew international attention to the city's growing prominence in competitive mathematics and prompted a special felicitation visit by Henry Ong, founder and CEO, Singapore International Math Contests Centre (SIMCC).

(L-R) Bhagyam Shekar, academic advisor and mentor, NPS Super 4; Shilpa Jain, director, The Talent Scholar; Tanuj Garg, Meenu Bhattacharya, principal, NPS East; Rupendra Dubey, head of Olympiad, India; Henry Ong, founder & CEO, SIMCC with NPS Super 4 students

SIMCC is associated with prestigious global mathematics competitions, including the AMO and the Singapore and Asian Schools Math Olympiad (SASMO). Ong spent a week in Bengaluru in February, engaged with students and distributed medals across the four NPS campuses—NPS Whitefield, NPS East, NPS Marathahalli, and NPS Silk Board.

"It is wonderful to recognise students who have achieved such outstanding results," Ong said during the felicitation ceremony, adding, "Their analytical ability is clearly reflected in these accomplishments."

> Strong performance reflects early discipline. When students are consistently exposed to structured reasoning, they develop clarity, confidence and the ability to handle complexity at every stage of their academic journey.
>
> – **Tanuj Garg,** director, NPS Super 4 and founder, The Talent Scholar

(L-R) Tanuj Garg, Henry Ong, founder & CEO, SIMCC; Rupendra Dubey, head of Olympiad, India

Foundational Understanding

Behind these results is The Talent Scholar (TTS), which offers a structured after-school online programme, open to all students in classes III to VIII across schools, focused specifically on Olympiad preparation. The students engage with deeper analysis, non-routine problems and multi-step reasoning that extend well beyond standard classroom expectations. This approach builds firm foundational understanding within school and extends it through structured exposure to higher-order challenges and gradually develop the analytical stamina required for competitive mathematics.

"Strong performance reflects early discipline," said Tanuj Garg, director, NPS Super 4, adding, "When students are consistently exposed to structured reasoning, they develop clarity, confidence and the ability to handle complexity at every stage of their academic journey."

Opening Pathways

Recognising growing interest in early preparation, TTS is expanding access through the Core Math Summer Series, launching 20 April 2026.

When executed effectively, Olympiad preparation develops far more than speed or computational technique. Students become comfortable navigating unfamiliar problem types under strict time constraints. Logical reasoning sharpens, conceptual clarity deepens, and the resulting confidence often carries forward into board examinations and future competitive entrance tests.

A class VI student, who secured a perfect score said, "At first, I thought Olympiad problems were impossible. But TTS taught me to break them down step by step changed that. Now I actually enjoy the challenge—it's like solving a mystery."

At NPS Super 4, the students are introduced to rigorous thinking young, and it is nurtured consistently to equip them not just to win medals but to excel wherever academic depth is required.

Winners of American Math Olympiad

Core Math Summer Series 2026

Starts: April 20, 2026
For: Classes III–VIII
Early Olympiad preparation through TTS
Scan the QR code for details and registration

RVIM awards Rs 1.5 lakh scholarships to 64 MBA students

As many as 64 students from the MBA 2024-2026 batch were awarded scholarships of Rs 1.5 lakh each at the Silver Jubilee celebrations of RV Institute of Management (RVIM), a unit of RV Educational Institutions, held recently at the Mangala Mantap Auditorium, NMKRV Campus, Jayanagar 3rd Block, Bengaluru. The students had secured admission through the merit quota. The Institute also honoured the top 15 academic achievers from the same batch with scholarships of Rs 50,000 each, while subject-wise toppers received Rs 10,000 each. Alongside the student recognitions, RVIM felicitated its founder director, TV Raju, and 13 alumni achievers across categories, including corporate leadership, entrepreneurship, academia, CXO roles, arts and culture, and sports. Staff members were also acknowledged for their service to the institution.

NCERT recalls banned class VIII textbook following SC directive

After the Supreme Court imposed a blanket ban on a class VIII NCERT textbook, the Council issued an urgent advisory requesting the return of all physical copies and the deletion of related social media posts. The controversy surrounds the textbook Exploring Society: India and Beyond, Social Science class VIII Part-II, which included a chapter highlighting judicial corruption, massive case backlogs, and judge shortages. The MoE has also directed the Information and Broadcasting and Electronics ministries to halt the book's digital dissemination.

Wrong UGC NET 2025 answer key leaves candidates in a limbo

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Image generated by AI

The release of the final answer key for the UGC NET December 2025 examination has triggered allegations of discrepancies in subjects, including History, Economics, Hindi Literature, Political Science, Physical Education and English Literature. This has left the aspirants distressed, prompting them to take legal action against the National Testing Agency (NTA). Aggrieved candidates claimed that despite raising objections to several questions in the provisional answer key, released on 14 January 2026, no corrections were made in the final answer key published on 4 February 2026, intensifying uncertainty over the fairness of the evaluation process.

The provisional answer key was released on 14 January, following which candidates challenged questions by paying a fee of Rs 200 per question, as per NTA guidelines. The incorrect answers remained unchanged in the final answer key released on 4 February, despite being flagged by candidates and academics. This has led to widespread anxiety, particularly among those who narrowly missed qualifying for the Junior Research Fellowship (JRF).

A writ petition was filed by Kartikeya, a history student at the University of Delhi (DU) in the Delhi High Court, challenging the incorrect answers in NET history question paper. Mumbai-based EdTech firm Testbook filed an impleadment application on behalf of affected students, citing nearly 11 incorrect questions in History as well as in Education, Economics, Commerce and Hindi Literature.

JRF Cut-off

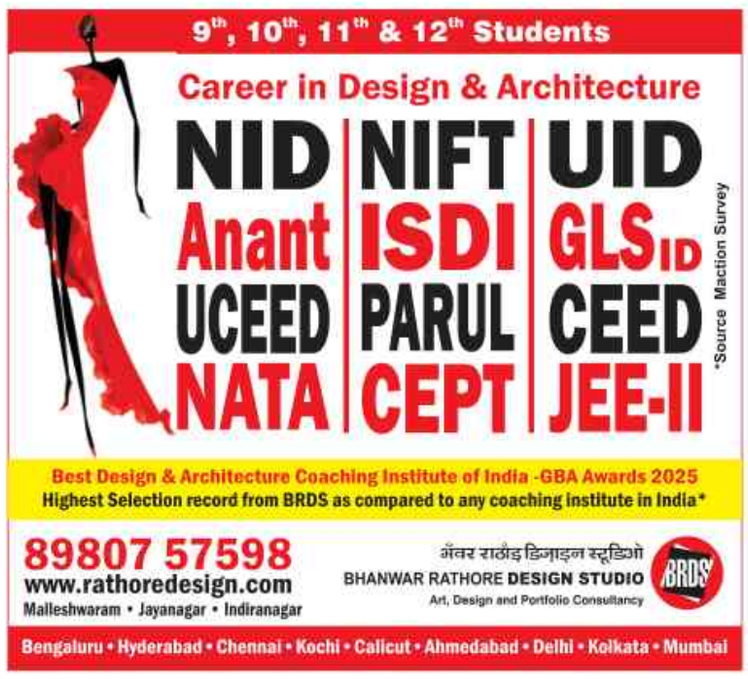
Several candidates claim they missed qualifying for JRF by a narrow margin due to these discrepancies. Mohd Unaid Siddique from Delhi, who scored 218 out of 300 in Economics and fell short of the JRF cut-off by two marks, says, "Six questions were marked incorrectly in the provisional answer key. In the final answer key, only one answer was changed, while the remaining five were retained. I will not be able to qualify for the JRF, which was crucial as a research scholar." Payal, a candidate from Uttar Pradesh who appeared for NET in Hindi Literature, claims that one incorrect question cost her 1 mark, which impacted her JRF eligibility.

Anjali, who appeared for Physical Education at a Mohali centre, also alleges that she missed qualifying JRF NET by one mark. She also questioned the financial burden that comes along with the objection process. "Even after paying Rs 200 per question to challenge the answers and receiving nothing in return, it becomes a financial strain, especially for deserving students from middle- and lower-income backgrounds."

Some aspirants claim this is not the first time discrepancies have occurred. In previous cycles, they allege, there were typically one or two debatable questions, whereas this time, multiple questions across subjects are being contested.

Abhishek, hailing from Kangra, who appeared for the History exam and missed qualifying for it by one incorrect answer says, "Such errors make students doubt their own abilities and the process as well. Integrity, honesty and accountability are essential in conducting an examination for which lakhs of aspirants prepare."

Ashwani Tyagi, who teaches History for UGC NET preparation, says, "Despite students providing evidence for 11 incorrect questions in History, the final key was released without rectification. One question had two identical answer combinations, yet only one was treated as correct in the final key." With the the matter now with the HC, candidates remain uncertain about their future. The court has reportedly granted the NTA a 28-day period to constitute an expert committee and issue a final order.



CONTRAPUNTO

The good Lord didn't see fit to put oil and gas only where there are democratically elected regimes friendly to US

– DICK CHENEY

Questions For Don, Bibi

US & Israel's attack may not free Iranians and, worst case, produce a West Asian crisis

In attacking Iran, Trump and Netanyahu may have crossed a line from confrontation into open defiance of what remains of international law. There is no credible legal framework that justifies a sweeping military campaign of this scale. No one with an ounce of sense will mourn the death of a brutal dictator like Khamenei. But that doesn't put a legal pink ribbon on the war.

Khamenei savagely crushed dissent whenever it surfaced. From the Iranian Green Movement to the 2022 uprising sparked by the death of Mahsa Amini, the state's answer was consistent: force, fear, and fatalities. Many Iranians feel terrified of and estranged from the leadership – brute authority grafted onto a society yearning to breathe. Sanctions, fuelled in part by Tehran's incendiary rhetoric and regional adventurism, have punished citizens far more than the elite. Till now, the regime survived; the public paid the price.

But is that regime now ending? That's the tricky question. Popular revulsion towards authoritarianism does not translate into tactical wisdom. Removing a regime by foreign force is a perilous gamble. Even if the clerical order collapses, what rises in its place is uncertain. Iran's opposition is fragmented. Exiled figures such as Reza Pahlavi command diaspora sympathy but not much support inside Iran. Groups like Mojahedin-e-Khalq are a basket case themselves. Ethnic groups like Kurds and Balochs have their own agendas.

Let's not forget the Ayatollah regime cultivated a web of armed actors: Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, its Quds Force, Basij militia, and regional proxies such as Kata'ib Hezbollah and Ansar Allah. In a protracted conflict, these networks can ignite flashpoints across West Asia, turning a bilateral clash into regional chaos. In the first 36 hours of the conflict, Iran targeted Israel, put US military assets in the region in its crosshairs, and hit some installations in Bahrain, Qatar and UAE. The impact seemed limited. But what if Tehran's warning of a great retaliation is borne out?

Of course, for Washington and Jerusalem, the ideal outcome would be an internal recalibration – a pragmatic figure emerging from within the system to negotiate a reset. But that hinges on whether the Revolutionary Guard chooses survival through compromise or resistance through escalation. No one knows the answer to that right now. So, there's a chance this confrontation could spiral fast – and ugly. That's terrible news for the world and for India. Oil (the focus of our next comment) apart, there are 8mn Indians in Gulf. GOI has a tough job going forward.

Oil At $100?

Not if war is short, or China and US use their oil reserves to ease pressure on market

Oil prices were rising before Iran war started Saturday. Question now is, how high will they go? Analysts say it depends on how long war lasts. When Israel attacked Iran last June, oil briefly jumped from less than $70 a barrel to around $80, which was far below the $100-$120 analysts had predicted. But that was a 12-day war. This time, amid US buildup, oil had already touched $72.5 by Friday. It's expected to nudge $75 today, and rise to $100 eventually if war drags on.

A prolonged war will impact W Asian oil supplies to big buyers like India and China in three ways. One, tankers can't sail through Strait of Hormuz under Iranian fire; two, Iran targets neighbours' wells and refineries, and three, its proxies in Yemen once again close Red Sea route to ships. If tankers reroute around S Africa, freight costs alone could rise up to 60%.

Some 20mn barrels of oil flows through Strait of Hormuz daily – roughly equal to India-China combined daily demand. There's no easy way to replace it. After India scaled back Russian supplies under US pressure, its dependence on oil from Iraq and Saudi Arabia has increased. With Venezuela producing less than 1mn barrels a day, it's not an alternative. Brazil and US supplies won't be available immediately either.

Oil at $100 is bad news beyond pump prices because it will stoke inflation. By some estimates, a 0.6-0.7 percentage point increase is possible. That will slow down economic growth. If dollar strengthens – it likely will – the hit will be even harder. But how bad things get will also depend on how US and China use their strategic petroleum reserves. Mid-Feb, US had around 415mn barrels in stock, and China possibly 1.3bn – enough to cover four months' demand. If both draw from their reserves – China probably will while prices are high – and buy less oil over the next few weeks, global price pressure might ease.

Yalla Dubai

As war debris falls on the city, it does not panic

Bikram Vohra

Columnist based in Dubai

While attacks on a city known globally for its glitz and glamour are undeniably stressful, the public reaction in Dubai reveals an awesome side to our psyche. As I write, life, for most of us, is normal. All we are doing is heeding the advice of staying indoors to avoid the debris of intercepted missiles.

And we are a pretty hardy lot, all 220 nationalities that make this city hum. There's concern in huge, big dollops, for sure, but no panic. That is Dubai for you and pretty much proud we are of this resilience under fire. We are not just bling and bells and whistles, we own this place and only when the chips are down do we realise there is gravel in the gut.

Oops oops there were two bangs right now, windows are rattling. But the authorities lead from the front and their mind-blowing efficiency makes us feel we belong, that we are being taken care of – which makes it all the more annoying that this city is being targeted. Yet, the metro is running, the buses are on time, the cabbies are in full force and delivery mobike posses are creating their normal roar. It is this community spirit that has got us through Day One. Even the ATP 500 finals were not cancelled Saturday evening. This said, the unease of not knowing where it's all going in the future is real and tangible.

But we are assuring friends and family in the home countries as much as they are calling us. Truly telling friends and neighbours to be concerned but not be stupid. No point rushing off to the desert and getting stuck. The rescue teams have bigger fish to fry. No point congregating in large groups in the open. No one is really panicking, buying or stocking up at the supermarkets. Come Monday it is a work day and Dubai for most purposes will open for business.

Stay home because if you try to check into a hotel in another emirate as a resident they won't check you in. Priority is for those who are stranded and in transit. That says it all. In a city where many live in towering apartment buildings, neighbours who had only ever exchanged polite nods in the elevator are suddenly checking in on each other, sharing snacks, and forming impromptu support pods.

It is a masterclass in trust between a govt and its people. Both ways. Our city isn't just big buildings and glitz. It's the people, who, when the sky lights up for the wrong reasons, choose to stand closer together.

AFTER AYATOLLAH...

Does US have a blueprint? Will Iran, stretched to the limits, descend into Syria-like chaos?

Jane Kinninmont

West Asia expert based in London

Khamenei dead, Iran's ruling establishment has entered what can only be described as survival mode. Faced with a threat it views not merely as strategic but existential, Tehran is responding with instincts of a system under siege. That's why Gulf states, too, have found themselves in the crosshairs. Objective is regime preservation – and willingness to raise costs across the region reflects precisely that.

Even Oman – long positioned as a discreet diplomatic bridge and recently at the forefront of efforts to revive a nuclear deal – reported missiles heading towards its economically vital port of Duqm.

The symbolism is stark: no state is insulated, not even those pursuing de-escalation. Images of fires near Gulf economic hubs reverberate far beyond the battlefield, unsettling markets and rattling investor confidence. Should Iran's govt survive this crisis, it will likely find itself more regionally isolated than at any point in recent memory. Yet from Tehran's vantage point, if survival is at stake, isolation is a secondary concern.

Transition in Tehran appears structured enough to ensure continuity. Yet political systems under pressure rarely move without friction. In the coming weeks, tensions within the Iranian elite are likely to surface – disagreements over whether the Islamic Republic must adapt to survive, or whether defiance remains its only viable doctrine.

Earlier, Tehran could rely on its network of non-state allies – Hezbollah, Hamas, the Houthis. That deterrent web has now been significantly degraded by Israeli operations. So, Iran faces the uncomfortable reality that its layered deterrence no longer carries the same credibility.

From Washington and Tel Aviv's perspective, a weakened Iran, rebuilding its deterrence while edging closer to nuclear threshold status, was deemed a risk worth pre-empting. What happens next hinges on several volatile variables. Will the Iranian state remain centralised, or begin to fragment under pressure? Will public discontent coalesce around opposition figures capable of mobilising sustained resistance? And if it does, will the security apparatus – battle-hardened and uncompromising – revert to decisive repression?

The strategic fork in the road is equally stark. Does the leadership double down on confrontation with US and Israel, framing compromise as capitulation? Or does it explore accommodation, seeking to preserve the system through recalibration rather than escalation?

Washington's posture adds another layer of uncertainty. Would US actively pursue regime collapse? Or would "regime decapitation" suffice – a symbolic victory following Khamenei's death, allowing President Trump to declare success and step back?

One conceivable pathway resembles what some in Washington have termed a "Venezuela scenario": encouraging the rise of a more pragmatic figure within the system, someone capable of striking a limited deal. Yet such an outcome may leave IRGC dominant – effectively producing a paramilitary state with trappings of religion. Whether IRGC, born of ideological resistance to US influence, would entertain such a pivot is deeply uncertain.

TEHRAN TURMOIL

Then there is the possibility of systemic collapse – partial or total. History offers sobering lessons. Collapse can produce transition; it can also unleash civil war. Syria's trajectory – prolonged devastation followed by uncertain political shift – is a cautionary example.

A purely domestic political reset, led by pragmatists capable of rebuilding trust with their own population, would arguably be the least destabilising outcome. It is also, perhaps, the least probable.

The other problem is that the perceived operational success of previous pressure campaigns may have recalibrated Washington's risk tolerance – so, rather than entering with a detailed blueprint for post-conflict Iran, the approach feels opportunistic.

US invasion of Iraq stands as a warning: unintended consequences often emerge not from the opening salvos, but from what follows. Remember, Iran played a decisive role in complicating the US occupation there.

The final question may not concern Iran alone. Other powers, wary of an unpredictable American president, might calculate that drawing Washington deeper into an Iranian quagmire serves their interests. In a world of shifting alliances and opportunistic strategy, destabilisation can become a tool of deterrence.

Israel really wanted this war. But does it, and US, have a coherent exit strategy?

Attila Somfalvi

Political analyst based in Tel Aviv

The war surprised almost no one in Israel. For weeks, the slow-motion collapse of US-Iran negotiations had been visible. It was widely understood Netanyahu had been pressing Trump to use force.

Against that backdrop – and amid intensifying unrest within Iran – the belief took root in Tel Aviv that rhetoric alone would not bend Tehran's course. The regime's violent repression of its own citizens reinforced a broader perception that it'll yield only to pressure. Thus, the elimination of Khamenei marks a pivotal and deeply symbolic rupture.

But what follows? Will this moment galvanise Iranians to mount a decisive challenge from within? Or will the system close ranks, restore equilibrium, and project continuity in the face of shock?

Khamenei's rule was defined by ideological rigidity paired with institutional entrenchment. Power radiated not only from the supreme leader's office but through a dense network of security bodies and patronage structures. Chief among them is IRGC, a hybrid force that is at once military, economic conglomerate, and guardian of revolutionary orthodoxy.

Its reach extends beyond Iran's borders through allied militias and proxies that provide Tehran with strategic depth and asymmetric leverage.

That infra does not dissolve overnight. Those who now compete to shape Iran's future will prioritise survival – personal, institutional, and ideological.

A weakened regime may seek to consolidate internally before recalibrating externally. It may gamble on escalation to restore deterrence. Or it may quietly explore accommodation to preserve the core of its power. None of these paths guarantees the emergence of a freer Iran, nor do they ensure regional calm.

From a broader West Asian perspective, the present confrontation is not an isolated eruption but a continuation of the conflict that ignited on Oct 7, 2023. That watershed moment reshaped the strategic landscape.

Hezbollah was battered and stripped of much of its aura of invincibility. Hamas saw its operational capacity in Gaza severely degraded. Long-standing assumptions – including the belief that Israel would refrain from striking Iran directly – were upended.

Since then, the region's geopolitical tectonics have been in motion. Alliances are recalibrating; deterrence equations are being rewritten. The current US-Israeli campaign aims not merely to disrupt Iran's capabilities but to redefine the strategic order for years to come. Whether it succeeds depends on more than firepower. It hinges on political endurance, diplomatic foresight, and the management of unintended consequences.

Complicating matters is the evolving American domestic landscape. The operational intimacy between the Israel Defense Forces and US military remains formidable. Yet Israel's standing in American public opinion has shifted.

Surveys increasingly show greater sympathy among Americans for Palestinian aspirations than for Israeli policies – a dramatic departure from decades of bipartisan consensus. Support in Congress, once reflexive, is now more contested. American politicians, attentive to voters weary of protracted conflicts, cannot ignore this trend.

The implication is stark: Trump may be among the last US presidents to align so instinctively with Israel's strategic outlook. If that anchor weakens in future administrations, Israel could face a more conditional partnership with its most critical ally.

That reality lends urgency to the present campaign. If this is indeed a rare strategic window to neutralise what Israel perceives as an existential Iranian threat, its outcome must justify the risks undertaken.

Meanwhile, Israeli society confronts the tangible strain of war. Time spent in shelters and fortified rooms now surpasses that of the June 2025 conflict. Sirens fracture routine; interceptions illuminate night skies; casualties underscore the human cost of strategic ambition. Israelis are resilient, seasoned by decades of crisis. Yet resilience is not inexhaustible.

Militarily, results of coordinated Israeli and American strikes appear significant. But war cannot be measured solely in sorties flown or targets destroyed.

A war must culminate in a coherent exit strategy – one that translates battlefield advantage into diplomatic architecture and geopolitical stability. Without that, even the most impressive tactical victory risks dissolving into another chapter of unresolved confrontation in a region already weary of endless war.

Trump's Real Goals: Get Iran's Energy, Geopolitically Hobble China, Russia. But Big Shifts Rarely Happen Smoothly

Aydin Sezer

Ex-Turkish diplomat based in Ankara

Why Israel is attacking Iran is clear. Why Trump is, is a much more complicated answer. And it has nothing to do with 'freedom' for Iranian people.

First, energy. Iran possesses the world's second-largest natural gas reserves and one of the largest oil reserves. Sanctions have kept those hydrocarbons largely outside Western markets. A reintegrated Iran would not merely sell oil; it would redraw the global energy map. Iranian energy supply, once politically unthinkable, now sits in the realm of strategic possibility. Opening Iran's fields to Western capital would not simply be commercial – it would be geopolitical.

Second, China. Beijing is Tehran's primary oil customer and a key partner in sanctions-era trade. Iran is a critical corridor in the Belt and Road Initiative, serving as a connective bridge between East Asia and Europe. Any shift that brings Iranian exports under US regulatory orbit weakens China's energy security. Control does not require occupation; it requires integration into a Western-dominated financial and logistical system. In the age of great-power competition, pipelines can matter as much as aircraft carriers.

Third, Russia. Moscow and Tehran have grown closer in recent years. So, if and when Iran's energy re-enters Western markets at scale, Moscow's leverage over Europe narrows dramatically. Integrating the South Caucasus and Central Asia into Western energy corridors would further dilute Russian influence. In that sense, Iran is not just a regional file – it is a hinge in the wider Eurasian contest.

But geopolitics is never purely external. Iran's internal dynamics matter just as much. Years of economic strain, currency collapse, and social unrest have eroded the social contract between state and citizen. Brutal crackdowns following protest waves have damaged trust in ways that may not be easily repaired. The opposition remains fragmented and leaderless, yet dissatisfaction is widespread and generational.

Regime change, however, need not resemble revolution. It may not mean the fall of the Islamic Republic in dramatic fashion, nor the restoration of monarchy. Transformation could emerge through elite recalibration – new actors within the system repositioning Iran towards gradual normalisation.

Unless, US and Israel decide to exploit Iran's subregional flashpoints. The most volatile variable lies along Iran's periphery. Kurdish regions in the west (Rojhilat), Azeri-majority areas in the northwest, and Baluch communities in the southeast have long existed at sensitive fault lines. External encouragement of ethnic dissent – even subtle – can magnify local grievances into national crises. Pressure could materialise through managed instability: intelligence support, calibrated strikes, and political backing of sub-state actors. Such strategies are less visible than war, but no less transformative.

And then there is the question of public psychology inside Iran. Historically, foreign intervention has triggered nationalist consolidation. Yet today, fatigue and disillusionment complicate that reflex. Some may resist; others may wait in silence, uncertain whether external pressure heralds catastrophe or opportunity.

If Tehran were to emerge from isolation and enter the Western system, the result would not simply be sanctions relief. It would be a structural reordering of West Asia. An Israel-Gulf-Iran axis – once unimaginable – could anchor a pragmatic commercial zone under a renewed American umbrella. Iranian gas flowing to Europe would squeeze Moscow's room for manoeuvre. Beijing's Eurasian corridor would require recalibration. Global capital would find one of the region's largest untapped markets suddenly accessible.

Remember, though, tectonic shifts rarely unfold cleanly. Power transitions in ideologically anchored states tend towards turbulence. The question is not whether Iran changes – all states do. The question is how violent the passage becomes, and who shapes its direction.

In the end, the struggle over Iran is not only about centrifuges or missiles. It is about who writes the geopolitical code of West Asia for the next generation – and whether that code is drafted through negotiation, implosion, or confrontation.

Calvin & Hobbes

Sacred*space*

All war-propaganda, all screaming and lies and hatred, comes invariably from people who are not fighting.

George Orwell

Unheeded Wisdom And A Materialistic Superpower

Jwalant Swaroop

When Swami Vivekananda, Paramhansa Yogananda, Osho, and AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupad arrived in US, they carried with them not merely Eastern teachings, but a corrective wisdom meant for a civilisation rising rapidly in external power yet lacking inner anchorage. From the Indic perspective, such arrivals are never accidental. They appear when imbalance reaches a critical threshold. America listened – but only partially.

The teachings of these masters were admired, commodified, and selectively adopted, yet rarely integrated at the civilisational or institutional level. Meditation became a productivity tool rather than a path to self-transcendence. Yog became physical fitness rather than inner discipline. Devotion was aestheticised, but its demand for surrender and restraint was largely resisted. The deeper challenge – to reorder values – remained unanswered.

Instead, US continued its relentless pursuit of material expansion: economic dominance, technological acceleration, military reach, and cultural influence. This trajectory produced unparalleled wealth and innovation, but it also pushed materialism to its limits. Indic philosophy would describe this as rajas unchecked by sattva – endless activity without inner clarity. When action loses its grounding in wisdom, it eventually exhausts both the actor and the system. The nation that mastered the outer world failed to cultivate the inner one. Political polarisation, cultural fragmentation, and social distrust are not isolated phenomena; they are a collective expression of an unintegrated consciousness. Without a shared spiritual foundation, freedom fractures into chaos, and choice becomes confusion.

THE SPEAKING TREE

Today, that exhaustion is visible not in the collapse of infra, but in the collapse of inner well-being. Despite abundance, American society faces widespread anxiety, and meaninglessness. Upanishads warned long ago: when the Self is forgotten, suffering multiplies even in comfort.

From this vantage point, the work of Vivekananda, Yogananda, Osho, and Prabhupad appears tragically prophetic. They foresaw that material success without inner wisdom would not liberate humanity, but burden it. Their teachings were not anti-Western or anti-progress; they were warnings wrapped in compassion. Yet warnings ignored do not disappear – they return as crises.

Indian philosophy teaches that when adharm peaks, correction follows. Even now, millions practise meditation, chant, inquire, and seek meaning – often unknowingly walking paths illuminated by these teachers. What was once fringe is now mainstream, though still incomplete. Challenge of the present moment is not introduction, but integration.

The future will belong not to those who abandon material progress, but to those who subordinate it to consciousness. Power must bow to wisdom, growth to restraint, freedom to responsibility.

In this light, the failure of America is not that it rejected spirituality outright, but that it treated it as an accessory rather than a foundation. Indic philosophy is unequivocal: when the inner order is restored, the outer order follows naturally.

The new world order, therefore, will emerge not from those who push materialism beyond its breaking point, but from those who learn – perhaps painfully – that consciousness is ultimate currency of civilisation.

Protection with purpose: Educators sceptical if blanket ban on social media is feasible

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As global momentum builds around restricting children's access to social media, sparked by Australia banning under-16s from platforms such as Instagram, YouTube and Facebook; Indian educators are urging a balanced, context-sensitive approach rather than outright prohibition. The debate has gained further traction after calls from French President Emmanuel Macron and discussions within India, including concerns raised in the Economic Survey 2026 and consultations initiated by Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah.

In the current scenario, children are excessively hooked to social media, making mindful usage and targeted regulation essential. Anita Malhotra, director and principal, Lotus Valley International School, Gurgaon, says, "Social media usage during school hours should be strictly restricted on the school premises, as excessive screen time hampers physical exposure and meaningful engagement. Platforms such as Instagram have significantly impacted young minds, often exposing children to harmful content without adequate understanding, so there is a need for

Image generated by AI

Social media acts as the equivalent of a digitally addictive drug that winds up ensnaring young minds

structured restriction rather than an absolute prohibition." Highlighting the importance of dialogue, parents and schools must discuss the pros and cons of social media with children, so they understand the reasons behind restrictions, she adds.

While acknowledging that completely banning social media in an era where digital tools are increasingly prominent may not be practical, she advocated regulation, accountability, and responsible use. After the Covid-19 pandemic, many schools began using social media as a mode of information dissemination. "In such a situation schools maintain a structured communication system through its official portal, which is meant to be accessed only by parents, while students are expected to rely on school diaries for regular academic updates. This ensures that important information reaches both parents and students without making children dependent on social media platforms," adds Malhotra.

As viral games and social media trends blur the boundaries between the real and virtual, mental health experts warn that excessive screen time, dwindling physical activity, and digital addiction are fuelling a new wave of behavioural and lifestyle disorders among India's youth.

Consumption Loop

Taking a more decisive stance, Ted Mockrish, head of school, Canadian International School, Bangalore, argues that urgent intervention is overdue. Describing platforms as exploitative by design, he adds that social media functions as the equivalent of a digitally addictive drug that winds up ensnaring young minds and keeps them in a consumption loop rather than a creation route. "The issue is not digital devices themselves, but a system in which teens are being used as commodities to consume," he adds.

Highlighting India's huge population, he argues the country has a moral responsibility to act. "India has more kids in school than the entire population of USA. It would be worth looking at why kids need to have access to social media. Everyone was simply fine before social media became popular, but the statistics now show the direct correlation with the rise of social media and the use of cell phones to the dramatic rise of teen depression worldwide, so it is time for us to start taking up measures to change the scenario," says Mockrish.

ALERTS

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  Eligibility: UG or PG candidates with a degree in General Psychology
  Deadline: March 5, 2026
  Link: *https://shorturl.at/kcytq*

- **Acharya Bangalore Business School** invites applications for its MBA (Entrepreneurship) programme
  Eligibility: Open to aspiring founders, early-stage entrepreneurs, family business successors
  Deadline: Rolling admissions
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Gopalan School of Architecture and Planning wins its second consecutive VTU gold medal

The structured academic framework at Gopalan Group of Institutions reflects an environment that encourages rigour and mentorship

When architect Uthpala Kiran received the gold medal from Visvesvaraya Technological University (VTU) for 2024-25, it marked an academic milestone. The award recognised her performance in M.Arch (Construction Project Management), as she secured a CGPA of 9.97. The recognition also marked the second consecutive VTU gold medal for the Gopalan School of Architecture and Planning, adding to the institution's academic record.

This recognition reflects an environment that encourages rigour and mentorship; it highlights a system that emphasises industry-aligned pedagogy and experiential education. The Gopalan Group of Institutions has built an ecosystem spanning engineering education, graduate programmes such as BCA, BBA, and BSc; postgraduate studies including MBA, MCA, and MCom; doctoral research (PhD); and Ayurvedic healthcare research.

These institutions focus on academic depth, professional relevance, and holistic development. The Group's emphasis on quality education has also received national recognition. Gopalan National School (GNS) and Gopalan

From classroom to construction site: students master project execution

Uthpala Kiran receiving the VTU Gold medal for 2024 -25

Regular workshops, live projects, internships, and mentorship further strengthen this ecosystem

International School (GIS) were honoured with the Times Education Excellence Awards in 2024 & 2025, noting their learning models, holistic development frameworks, and emphasis on future-ready education. These recognitions reflect the Group's attention to nurturing confident, compassionate, and globally aware learners from the foundational years onward.

Integral to this ecosystem is an emphasis on research and innovation. The Gopalan Foundation has secured 18 patents across its institutions with a culture of applied research. Aerospace Engineering leads with six patents, followed by Mechanical Engineering (three) and R&D (two), with additional contributions from CSE, ECE, Architecture, and school-level innovation from GIS and GNS.

GSAP's second consecutive gold medal strengthens this legacy, reaffirming GNS and GIS's commitment to building institutions where excellence is embedded in systems, outcomes remain consistently high, and future leaders are nurtured with purpose and integrity.

Beyond academic accolades, the achievement underscores the institution's commitment to cultivating future-ready professionals equipped with both technical expertise and ethical grounding. The emphasis on interdisciplinary collaboration, industry engagement, and real-world problem-solving has enabled students to translate classroom learning into impactful outcomes. Regular workshops, live projects, internships, and mentorship by experienced faculty members further strengthen this ecosystem. GSAP nurtures design thinking that balances creativity with sustainability and social responsibility. Students are encouraged to explore contextual architecture, innovative construction methodologies, and technology-driven solutions aligned with evolving urban and environmental challenges. Such an approach ensures that graduates are not only academically proficient but also socially conscious contributors to the built environment. The recognition at the university level reflects a culture where merit is celebrated, hard work is mentored, and aspirations are translated into measurable achievements. As the institution refocuses on shaping leaders who combine knowledge, innovation, and integrity, it reinforces its position as an academic leader under VTU.

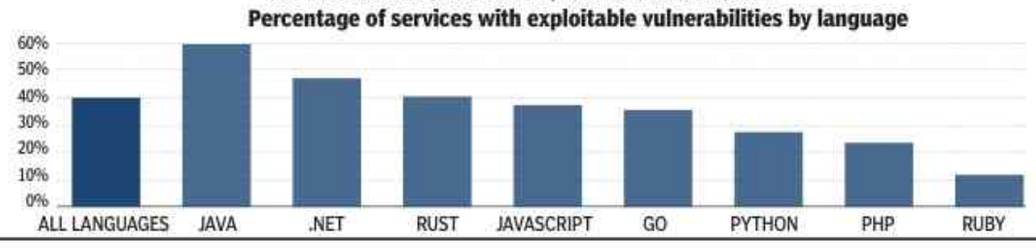
Architecture students engaged in hands on model making as part of studio learning

TIMES BUSINESS

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | MONDAY, MARCH 2, 2026

RUSHING CODE, RISKING SECURITY

of organisations operate software with at least one known exploitable vulnerability, affecting **40%** of services overall



42% rely on unmaintained libraries

50% adopt new libraries within 24 hours

Only **4%** pin all public GitHub Actions to specific commit hashes

Only **18%** of "critical" vulnerabilities remain critical once runtime context is applied, suggesting prioritisation gaps and noisy alerts

Source: Datadog State of DevSecOps Report 2026

D-St investors prepare for volatile week amid strife

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Dalal Street investors are looking at another volatile week, truncated by a holiday on Tuesday. The developments in West Asia during the weekend initially unnerved market players on Saturday and Sunday, but as the war between the US-Israel and Iran progressed, most are taking it in their stride. They expect sensex and Nifty to open the week lower and then stabilise.

Market players also see crude oil prices to jump on Monday, mainly because of expected supply disruptions in one of the biggest oil-producing regions in the world. This in turn could put pressure on the rupee. They also expect prices of the two precious metals—gold and silver—to jump on safe haven demands.

For govt bonds, it could be a tricky path to negotiate: On the one hand, there would be haven buying that would push up prices. On the other hand, the expected rise in inflation, mainly due to oil price hike, could pull down prices, market players said. According to V K Vijayakumar of Geojit Investments, the near-term impact of the war in West Asia would be negative. "Crude has spiked and if the crude price remains high for an extended period, (India's) balance of trade and balance of payments will be impacted since we import around 85% of our oil requirements."

Haifa Port in Israel is fully secure: Adani

New Delhi: Adani group on Sunday said its Haifa port in Israel is fully secure and operational amid heightened military conflict in Iran.

In a statement, Adani Ports & Special Economic Zone said: "Haifa Port Company confirms that all its employees are safe, and all port assets and infrastructure are fully secure and in operational condition."

It, however, did not say if any of the Iranian drones or missiles had hit the port. The port authority continues to monitor the situation and is in close coordination with the Ministry of Transport and Road Safety of Israel, and is operating as per their instructions. AGENCIES

West Asia Conflict: No Immediate Threat Seen | Policymakers Maintain That It's Too Early To Assess Impact On Economy

Govt keeps tabs on crude prices & goods movement

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Policymakers are keeping a close eye on oil prices and goods movement in the wake of the latest tension in West Asia, while maintaining that it's too early to assess the impact on the economy.

The first direct impact will be felt through energy prices, especially with India dependent on imports for bulk of its oil and gas needs, most of which is routed through West Asia. Any spike in oil prices will have a bearing on consumers and industry.

The Modi govt has managed pump prices through a mix of taxes and margins for oil retailers and the regime will continue. While oil companies were making profits on every litre of petrol and diesel until global prices went up, retail prices will first be regulated through reduced margins and if the situation warrants govt has headroom to lower domestic levies as well as import duty. On Sunday, Brent prices went up 10% to $80 a barrel on over-the-counter sales.

TURBULENT TIMES

- Oil prices may put **pressure on margins of retailers,** govt finances
- **Ships, containers** under watch as some are stranded. Maersk announced a stop in sailings through the **Bab el-Mandeb Strait and the Suez Canal,** to reroute ships around the Cape of Good Hope
- Dependence on DP World has complicated matters. A disruption in UAE will mean that **Indian businesses will have to reroute goods flow**
- **Rice exporters** have been advised to review how they price their goods

Given that there is less than a month to go for the close of the financial year, there is unlikely to be an impact on the budgeted numbers for the year. "It will all depend on how long this situation persists. At the moment, it's early to say what the impact will be," said an official.

If the tension persists, there will be an impact on goods moving in and out of the country and some of the supplies, including oil, gas, fertiliser and other critical inputs from the Wtest. At the moment, no shortage is seen.

A critical issue in the coming days will be movement of ships, some of which are stranded after the military action by the US and Israel and Iran's response on Saturday. "We will get to know in the next few days," said Fieo director general Ajay Sahai.

Danish container shipping group Maersk will pause sailings through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and the Suez Canal and reroute ships around the Cape of Good Hope, it said on Sunday. If this persists, ships going to Europe and the US will have to take a longer route, resulting in two to three weeks of additional sailing time, and impacting the supply of containers and vessels.

What will add to the complication is India's strong reliance on DP World, which now accounts for a large chunk of goods movement from the country's shores. A disruption in UAE will mean that Indian businesses will have to reroute goods flow.

So far, only the rice traders have been advised to review how they price their goods. "Indian Rice Exporters Federation has issued an advisory to its members in view of the deteriorating situation in Iran and parts of the Gulf, and reports that movements through the Strait of Hormuz could be restricted. Members are advised not to undertake new CIF (cost, insurance and freight) commitments for these destinations and, wherever feasible, to conclude sales on FOB (free on board) terms so that freight and insurance and related risks remain with the international buyer," the industry body said Sunday.

At nearly ₹1.84L cr, GST mop-up rises 8.1% in Feb

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: India's GST collections rose 8.1% to Rs 1,83,609 crore, pointing to higher consumption post rate reduction.

Domestic collections were estimated to have increased 5.3% to Rs 1,35,772 crore in Feb, based on transactions in Jan. The mop-up from imports was 17.2% higher at Rs 47,837 crore, according to latest official data. This was the third straight month of acceleration in collections since the revamped GST regime came into place.

"The consumption increase that has led to an 8% plus increase in the monthly and annual collections is also supported by the strong GDP data and other macroeconomic indicators published recently," said M S Mani, partner at consulting firm Deloitte. With rates coming down for a number of items, govt is banking on higher volumes due to a consumption boost to make up for a part of the revenue impact.

"Gross GST collections are showing a steady increase after GST 2.0, reflecting resilience in the economy backed by sustained demand. Many consumption states have had relatively higher growth than others. The data indicates that GST has entered into a phase of stable and predictable growth, which is encouraging to see. Higher growth on imports indicates buoyancy in cross-border trade activities," said Pratik Jain, partner at Price Waterhouse & Co.

On a net basis, collections were 7.9% higher at Rs 1.6 lakh crore as refunds rose 10.2% to Rs 22,595 crore.

Sikkim (67% growth), Meghalaya (33%) and Bihar (23%) were among the top performers in Feb, while Mizoram (24% fall), Uttarakhand (down 10%) and Madhya Pradesh (8% lower), were among the laggards. Among the large revenue earners, Tamil Nadu reported a 6% decline, while Maharashtra (6%), UP (5%), Gujarat (9%) and Karnataka

STAYING STRONG

TOI IN THE CLASSROOM

Why It's Important For Investors To Top Up Their SIPs

As individual incomes climb, wealth advisors often recommend that investors simultaneously increase their monthly Systematic Investment Plan (SIP) allocations. Here's a look at what these 'top-ups' mean

Invesco Mutual Fund

An investor education and awareness initiative

For Know Your Customer (KYC) guidelines along with the documentary requirements and procedure for change of address, phone number, bank details, etc., please visit the Education and Guidance section on www.invescomutualfund.com. Investor should deal with only SEBI registered Mutual Funds, details of which can be verified under "Intermediaries/Market Infrastructure Institutions" on https://www.sebi.gov.in/index.html. For any grievance / complaint, please call us on 1800-209-0007 or write to us at mfservices@invescoindia.com. Alternatively, complaints can be registered on the SEBI SCORES Portal at https://scores.sebi.gov.in

Mutual Fund investments are subject to market risks, read all scheme related documents carefully.

What Is A Top-Up SIP?

A top-up SIP, also known as a step-up SIP, is a facility offered by fund houses and online portals that allows an investor to automatically increase monthly investment contributions by a fixed percentage or a specific amount at predefined intervals—usually every 6 or 12 months. Instead of keeping monthly SIP contributions constant for years, a top-up ensures your investments grow in line with your income and financial goals.

How Does A Top-Up SIP Work?

When you start an SIP, you can choose the top-up feature. You can set the increase either as a percentage or a fixed amount.

For example, if your monthly SIP contribution is ₹10,000 and you opt for a 10% annual top-up, it works as follows:

- In the first year, you contribute ₹10,000 per month
- In the second year, the contribution rises to ₹11,000 per month
- In the third year, it increases to ₹12,100 per month
- If you choose a fixed increase of ₹1,000 per year, the contribution becomes ₹11,000 per month in the second year and ₹12,000 per month in the third year

Why Should Investors Use A Top-Up?

As the cost of living rises, ₹10,000 invested today will buy much less a decade from now. A top-up helps your investment value keep pace with inflation. It also automates your savings by directing a portion of your annual income increase towards wealth creation before you spend it. Since you add more capital over time, you can reach goals such as a home down payment or retirement corpus sooner than with a fixed SIP.

Should Investors Top Up SIPs?

While a top-up SIP automates the process, some financial planners recommend reviewing your portfolio annually, assessing changing needs and fund performance, and manually increasing SIPs where appropriate. Automated top-ups can work well for investors who lack discipline or do not review their portfolios regularly.

— PRASHANT MAHESH

Crisis in West Asia: IT majors issue travel alerts

Veena Mani & Shilpa Phadnis | TNN

Bengaluru: Major Indian IT firms issued detailed travel advisories and activated crisis-response teams as escalating geopolitical tensions in the Gulf region triggered widespread airspace closures and flight disruptions across key transit hubs.

Infosys advised employees scheduled to travel within the next 48 hours to check airline websites for real-time updates and consider postponing trips. "Employees currently in transit are advised to remain calm and follow airline instructions. All non-essential travel is strongly discouraged until further notice. The safety and well-being of our employees remain our top priority," the company said in an internal communication.

Cognizant activated its Middle East Local Incident Response Team (IRT), according to chief security officer John Wheeler's email. "An initial meeting was held, and the team will continue ongoing assessments and communications as warranted, with a focus on physical security, travel security and associate guidance," he said. The region's business resiliency managers were alerted, and coordination meetings were conducted to ensure continuity plans can be activated if necessary. The company issued targeted travel notices to associates affected by airline disruptions, offering guidance on rebooking, itinerary changes and regional mobility constraints.

IT firms activate crisis teams, suspend Gulf travel amid airspace closures

"Cyber operations are on heightened vigilance. There was no observed increase in threat activity targeting Cognizant infrastructure. Planned non-essential upgrades to certain security monitoring tools were deferred as a precaution," Wheeler added. The business information security officer (BISO) organisation is supporting client-facing teams and closely monitoring high-value and critical infrastructure clients that could face elevated risk. Associates were instructed to report any security concerns or suspected incidents through Cognizant's Corporate Security Incident System (CSIS).

TCS suspended all incoming and outgoing travel to and from the Gulf region, including transit travel, citing airspace closures in multiple countries. HR and country leadership teams are in active contact with associates and their families. "A call tree was activated, and associates in impacted and bordering regions are being contacted on priority. We are coordinating closely with local authorities and Indian embassies to track developments and will provide timely updates. The safety and well-being of our associates and their families remain our highest priority," the company said.

Wipro directed employees to follow official local govt guidelines and avoid all non-essential travel until further notice. Employees were advised to remain vigilant.

West Asia conflict to spark volatility in forex mkts

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: After a relatively firm Feb, the rupee is likely to start March on a volatile note as global capital shifts toward safe-haven assets amid escalating tensions in the West Asia. Dealers expect pressure to build from both portfolio outflows and concerns over India's trade deficit and energy supplies, given the region's central role in crude imports and merchandise trade.

Dealers said that the typical response of global capital is to seek safe haven and money is expected to move to short-term US treasuries where yields have already crashed.

High oil prices besides being inflationary will also put pressure on India's current account deficit since most of India's energy requirements are met through imports.

"The rupee is likely to open lower at 91.25. It's not just oil or portfolio outflows — the Middle East is central to India's trade flows, so any escalation there adds another layer of pressure. I expect a gap-down opening, but it's hard to put levels on it because once key stop-losses get triggered, the move can accelerate quickly. The RBI will likely step in to smooth volatility, but the question is not whether it intervenes, it's how much of the reserves it is willing to use if outflows persist," said KN Dey, a forex consultant.

"Besides oil prices, if there is a gap down opening in the equity markets, that will also spook the currency markets," said a dealer.

Bond yields are likely to rise as pressure on the currency will make it difficult for RBI to keep markets flush with liquidity to enable full transmission of interest rate cuts.

Premiums could be hiked; revoked war covers hit trade

Mayur.Shetty
@timesofindia.com

Mumbai: Insurers are bracing for "notice of cancellation" clauses to be invoked on war-risk covers and for multifold increases in war-risk premiums in the wake of conflict in the Middle East. Some marine war-risk insurers have already issued cancellation notices for ships transiting the Strait of Hormuz after the strikes amid fears of Strait closure. While aviation coverage remains active, airlines are playing it safe and suspending flights in the region. Insurers point out that there is often a grey area, as conditions of cover state the insured must take all precautions they would have taken if uninsured.

"In case of ships and airlines, insurers can issue a notice of cancellation of war cover for specified zones after due notice. For ships already at sea, ongoing voyages will remain covered until cancellation. Post-cancellation, they may impose geographic limits or increase premiums," said Kunal Khanna, MD–Reinsurance and global head of natural resources, Edme Insurance Brokers.

Car cos clock strong sales growth in Feb

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: India's top carmakers reported healthy growth in Feb, helped by steady domestic demand and a strong push in exports, with most major players clocking double-digit gains.

Market leader Maruti Suzuki reported total sales of about 2 lakh units in Feb 2026, up around 11.1% from about 1.8 lakh units in the same month last year. Domestic passenger vehicle sales stood at around 1.61 lakh units, almost flat compared to 1.6 lakh units a year ago. Exports, however, saw a sharp jump of over 56% to 39,155 units from 25,021 units, reflecting rising overseas demand.

Partho Banerjee, senior executive officer, marketing and sales, Maruti Suzuki, said, "Overall production capacities are now operating at 100% and our new line is expected to be commissioned by April, so from May onwards, we will be able to further scale up our numbers." Hyundai Motor India posted total sales of 66,134 units in Feb, marking a 12% increase compared to last year, and emerged as the second largest player.

Gaurav Vangaal, associate director at S&P Global Mobility, said the strong run may face external headwinds. "Feb sustained strong momentum for car sales, supported by a stable domestic environment, low inventory and robust consumer demand. However, the recent geopolitical conflict involving the US, Israel and Iran has emerged as a significant risk factor."

Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles reported sales of 63,331 units, registering a 35% rise, while M&M recorded overall sales of 63,042 units, reflecting a 19% growth. Toyota Kirloskar Motor sold 34,034 units, up 21.4% compared to Feb 2025.

Power usage up marginally at 1.9%

New Delhi: Power consumption in the country grew marginally by 1.9% to 133 billion units in Feb from 130.6 BU a year ago, as the use of heating appliances like geysers and blowers slowed down due to higher-than-usual temperature. TNN

AI can reduce animation costs 40%: Kharge

Bengaluru: Artificial intelligence could reduce animation production costs by 20–40% while accelerating turnaround times, Karnataka IT minister **Priyank Kharge** said, highlighting the technology's growing impact on the creative economy.

Addressing industry stakeholders at Bengaluru GAFX 2026, Kharge said AI-powered systems are streamlining multiple stages of the creative pipeline — from early-stage visualisation to final output — helping studios deliver projects faster and more efficiently. Tools driven by machine learning are simplifying pre-production processes, improving rendering efficiency and enabling the rapid creation of interactive gaming environments.

Such productivity gains, he said, could level the playing field for smaller and regional studios, enhancing their ability to scale. However, Kharge cautioned that rapid technological change brings complex challenges. He pointed to concerns around job displacement and shifting role definitions, ownership rights over machine-generated content, dependence on dominant global AI platforms, widening capability gaps in the workforce, and ethical risks. TNN

Airtel ties up with Google to check frauds

New Delhi: Airtel has partnered with Google to roll out more secure messaging in India, aimed against spam and digital fraud, by combining telecom grade checks with Google's Rich Communications Services (RCS) platform. The collaboration brings Airtel's network intelligence together with Google's RCS messaging and spam filters, allowing users to send and receive messages such as high-quality photos, videos and reactions, while adding multiple layers of protection against fraudulent and spam messages. Under the new system, business messages will go through real time verification. TNN

India a picture of stability in turmoil; to shape global growth in next decade: Das

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Former RBI governor Shaktikanta Das has said that amid the global turmoil, India is a picture of stability, influencing the global direction.

"The coming decade will not be one where India simply participates in global growth, but one where India shapes it," he said, framing macroeconomic stability and inflation control as compatible with sustained high growth.

At an event organised by Business Today, the principal secretary to PM said India combines sustained high GDP expansion with macroeconomic stability, structural reforms and rising global integration.

> "India has moved down its fiscal glide path from the pandemic peak, with central government debt targeted to decline towards 50% GDP (plus/minus 1%) by 2031. At the same time, capital expenditure has risen sharply. The approach reflects a model where consolidation does not come at the expense of growth."
>
> "Recent (trade) agreements mark a paradigm shift in India's external engagement, positioning the country in the central circle of global trade."
>
> —**Shaktikanta Das** | PRINCIPAL SECRETARY TO PM, FORMER RBI GOVERNOR

He said that nearly one-sixth of global real GDP growth post-pandemic has come from India, and the country remains the fastest-growing major economy.

The expansion he said is thanks to the nine building blocks put in place: structural reforms, fiscal consolidation alongside record capital expenditure, manufacturing push, deepening services exports, strong bank and corporate balance sheets, expanding digital public infrastructure and an assertive trade strategy.

The former central bank chief set out a forward-looking roadmap for India, arguing that the country is moving from recovery to global influence. According to Das the growth opportunities lie in deeper trade integration, AI-led productivity gains and a manufacturing resurgence spanning electronics, semiconductors, defence and green energy.

The global economy, he said, is navigating "persistent geopolitical fragmentation, supply-chain realignments and uneven economic momentum."

"We have to run a 'marathon and a sprint simultaneously', maintaining macroeconomic and financial sector stability while aggressively expanding new frontiers of growth."

Providing optimum regulation is our goal: Sebi chief

On Feb 28, Sebi Chief Tuhin Kanta Pandey Completed A Year As The Top Markets Regulator. He Spoke To **TOI's** Partha Sinha And Surojit Gupta. Excerpts:

In his first year at the helm of Sebi, chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey focused on restoring confidence in the regulator while pushing reforms in technology, market development and investor protection. From here on, he wants to focus on tackling mis-selling, using AI to fight fraud, deepening India's bond markets, and making India more attractive to foreign investors.

How do you look back at the year gone by? Have you been able to strengthen trust for all stakeholders?

Only stakeholders can answer that fully. When I joined, we had said we would focus on four areas: Trust, transparency, technology, and teamwork. These four 'T's may look abstract, but we worked in every area, we worked jointly. By teamwork, I mean teamwork within Sebi and externally, producing outcomes which are consistent with transparency, consistent with investor protection, consistent with trust building, and very importantly, technologically advanced.

> **On FPIs and India:** If you want to support a 7% plus growth, capital must come from both domestic and foreign sources....Foreign investors do look at India positively

The overall goal has been optimum regulation where we neither over-regulate, nor do we under-regulate. Over-regulation kills innovation. Under-regulation means there is not enough trust in the market and, therefore, the market doesn't develop. We need to see where that balance lies.

Take the recent reforms in the mutual fund sector. The industry wanted clarity, investors wanted protection. We reviewed regulations, clarified categorisation, and introduced measures like lifecycle funds. Investors now better understand scheme overlap, and the industry has clearer rules. We have facilitated ease of doing business, investor protection and empowerment, strengthened the regulatory framework, fostered market development, and have taken measures to strengthen the equity derivatives market. We have taken steps aimed at real outcomes, not rhetoric.

What are your priorities for the coming year?

Our mandate is clear: investor protection, market regulation, and market development. Several major reviews are under way — including LODR (Listing Obligations and Disclosure requirements) rules, settlement regulations, and PMS regulations. The commodity derivatives segment is another focus area. For a number of years we did not pay much attention to the commodity derivatives segment and certain rules were stagnant for a long time. There were operational issues which were not resolved, so the markets could not develop as much as we would have liked.

We are also working on expanding bond market instruments, including corporate bond indices being developed along with the RBI. These will deepen capital markets and improve risk-return choices for investors.

TOI INTERVIEW

Mis-selling of financial products is a big concern. Does the incentive structure need rethinking?

Every regulator has to look at it together. RBI is looking at it. We are looking at it. In our case, with mutual funds, we constantly see how mis-selling is happening. We constantly review distributor responsibilities and advertising codes in mutual funds. We have a new tool, Radar, an ad-review tool that ensures compliance before an advertisement is released. There is also the issue of registered advisors versus influencers.

We have taken strong actions against influencers and will continue to do that. We have an AI tool, Sudarshan, which has increased our efficiency by 40% in tracking such people in cyberspace. We have been able to take down more than 1,20,000 entries. We can now take down 7,000 items a month, up from 5,000 earlier. But whatever we do, we must act as per the law; we can't be whimsical.

AI is both an opportunity and a risk. How are you going to balance this? How are you going to guard investors against the threats from AI?

We use AI first for investor protection — identifying fraud and misleading promotions and to track influencers who misguide investors. We have used AI in reaching out to investors with our new tool , a 30-second pilot tool called SEBI Check

People are being lured by cloned apps, WhatsApp links, and fake communities with fake apps, and their money gets swindled. We asked, why are people, even educated people, giving so much money to fake apps? How can people be so careless when they spend so much time picking vegetables and bargaining? We have a tool which checks and responds within 30 seconds. If someone sends you a QR code, just scan it and they will tell you this is not a valid QR code for the securities market. If you are prompted to transfer to a bank account, you can put the account number in the app and check if it's fit for stock market transactions. To create that awareness at scale, we did a pilot with Sarvam AI using a tool in multiple languages. They made about 1,85,000 calls per day, just before the AI Impact Summit.

We looked at responses and there was 63% connectivity, indicating people were picking up the calls since those were made from a 1600-series, so they were not marked as spam. I heard some of the calls and they explained the tool beautifully and naturally.

They can now operate in multiple languages: From six languages initially which can be scaled to 22. A tool that can reach a large number of people in languages they understand has big potential for investor awareness. In future, we can reach millions of people through those channels so that they don't get swindled.

The other part is responsible investing and suitability for F&O markets. Influencers have educated people as if they can become rich overnight, showing only success and not failure rates.

Investor awareness is a vast area. We have done work with Amar Chitra Katha. Comics could be an important medium if they are available in schools and online, and if teachers are trained to teach financial planning to children using well-written, engaging conversations.

> **On quantum-safe tech:** Quantum-safe AI and other machine learning technologies are coming and are unstoppable. The issue is safe usage and responsible use. We have constituted committees with experts. We have also set up working groups looking at tech with 5-10-year plans

You had spoken about quantum-safe technology. Where do we stand now in that area?

We have a roadmap: we are assessing inventory at this moment, training people to take assessments so we know where vulnerabilities are. In every system and regulated entity, they have to find vulnerabilities. This year we will conduct assessments to know where cryptography is used and where changes are needed for post-quantum cryptography. There will be issues about which technologies to use, and how to convert existing systems. It's not simple because data at rest can be encrypted, data in transit can be encrypted, but data in process and data in use pose problems — normally you would decrypt to process, and if there is a breach you are vulnerable. Particularly in relation to the DPDP Act, data protection is important. Quantum-safe AI and other machine learning technologies are coming and are unstoppable. The issue is safe usage and responsible use. We have constituted committees with experts.

We live in uncertain times and markets are volatile almost every single day. How do you protect investors in this situation?

Indian markets are relatively less volatile. We have seen significant FPI outflows on the secondary side, but parallelly FPIs have come infused about $7–8 billion in the primary market. Overall there's been net outflows, but domestic institutions have counterbalanced these flows, which reduced volatility.

There will always be volatility in markets but volatility should be within manageable limits. I don't think Indian volatility is too high. Our vulnerability to FPIs is now less. If you want to support a 7% plus growth, capital must come from both domestic and foreign sources. We need diversity of markets: primary and secondary markets for bonds, Reits, AIFs, and private equity. Private markets alone are not sufficient; you need liquid public markets for retail participation.

> **On whitelisting of apps:** Google has started whitelisting market-related apps. It has advanced far in helping us and ensuring only whitelisted apps remain. Apple is having some technical issues and we are discussing

What steps are you taking to attract foreign investors?

Foreign investors do look at India positively. I have held about 77 meetings with investors from the US, Europe, Japan, Singapore, Australia and elsewhere. We ask them to forget short-term flows and consider structural issues that a regulator can address, though tax is beyond my comment here. We can ease registration and address operational issues. They pointed out problems like the block deal framework in the secondary market, and we fixed it. They said we didn't have a closing auction mechanism, that was pending for a long time and we fixed it. Netting concerns were raised and we put out a consultation paper to resolve them. These are major structural issues that we're addressing: A common contract note, reconciliation, T+1 settlement, and moving money on the same day at T+1. India remains an attractive market. We have about $850 billion of FPI already. Currently FPIs hold about 17% of equities in Indian companies, down from about 22% a few years ago. Domestic participation by individuals and mutual funds has increased.

Our market is large and diverse; we need multiple players, products, derivatives, and public markets to add to capital formation and growth. It's a virtuous cycle. We must keep removing frictions where possible, simplify where we can, and tighten where needed. A well-regulated market is desirable; nobody wants a very loose market.

> **On usage of AI in market regulation:** We use AI for investor protection, for identifying fraud and misleading promotions. Our first use has been to track influencers who mislead a lot of investors

Sebi was working with app stores for whitelisting of apps. What's the progress on this front?

We have advanced fairly. Whitelisting of apps is taking place. With Google we have succeeded—it has advanced far ahead in helping us and ensuring only whitelisted apps remain. Apple is having some technical issues. We have ongoing discussions with Apple about their technical constraints.

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Notice Inviting Tender (Through e-procurement portal only)

Reserve Bank of India, Bengaluru invites the e-tender for Installation and maintenance of filter coffee/tea/soup vending machines for supply of filter coffee/tea/soup in the bank's premises.

The details of qualification criteria and the detailed notice are available at "Tender" section of our website www.rbi.org.in. Last date for submission of e-tenders at MSTC Portal (https://mstcecommerce.com) is March 18, 2026 (13:00 Hrs)

Regional Director,
Reserve Bank of India, Bengaluru

भारतीय रिज़र्व बैंक
10/3/8, नृपतुंगा रोड, बेंगलूरु 560001

निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना (केवल ई-प्रोक्योरमेंट पोर्टल के माध्यम से)

भारतीय रिज़र्व बैंक, बेंगलूरु बैंक परिसर में फिल्टर कॉफी/चाय/सूप की आपूर्ति के लिए फिल्टर कॉफी/चाय/सूप वेंडिंग मशीनों की स्थापना और रखरखाव के लिए ई-निविदा आमंत्रित करता है।

योग्यता मानदंड का विवरण और विस्तृत सूचना हमारी वेबसाइट www.rbi.org.in के "निविदा" खंड में उपलब्ध है। एमएसटीसी पोर्टल (https://mstcecommerce.com) पर ई-निविदा जमा करने की अंतिम तिथि 18 मार्च, 2026 (13:00 बजे) है।

क्षेत्रीय निदेशक
भारतीय रिज़र्व बैंक, बेंगलुरु

25001/248/2526 E.Mail - serwcirclesbp@yahoo.com

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, SAMBALPUR
E-PROCUREMENT NOTICE
BID IDENTIFICATION NO. BRIDGE TENDER ONLINE RWCSBP-32/2025-26

1. Name of the Work : Bridge Works
2. Total No. of works : 03 nos Bridge work
3. Estimated cost : Rs. 276.40 lakhs to Rs. 898.59 lakhs
4. Class of contractor : 'B', 'A' & 'Spl'
5. Other details : As mentioned in DTCN

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender On-line for bidding	
		From	To
1	2	3	4
Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Sambalpur	BRIDGE TENDER ONLINE RWCSBP-32/2025-26	06.03.2026 11.00 A.M.	25.03.2026 05.00 P.M.

Further details can be seen from the website **www.tendersorissa.gov.in**

Sd/- Chief Construction Engineer
Rural Works Circle, Sambalpur
OIPR-25001/25091/1/25-26/0038

ARMY WELFARE EDUCATION SOCIETY CAMPUS
Nagareshwara Nagenahalli, PO-Kothanur, Bengaluru-560077.
Web : www.aifd.edu.in and www.aihmctbangalore.edu.in

REQUIRED: REGISTRAR AND HEAD OF ADMINISTRATION FOR ARMY WELFARE EDUCATION SOCIETY CAMPUS, BENGALURU

1. Application with Bio-Data are invited from **Retd. Col/Col (TS)** for the post of **Registrar and Head of Administration** for Army Welfare Education Society Campus, Bengaluru-560077.
2. Probable date of joining **01st May, 2026**
3. For Qualitative Requirements (Mandatory and Preferred) and other information, visit the website: **www.aihmctbangalore.edu.in** and **www.aifd.edu.in**
4. Application/CV to be sent by Post or E-mail by **21st March, 2026:**

Additional Director (AWES Cell)
HQ Dakshin Bharat Area
Island Grounds
Chennai-600009
Tel: 044-29572725
Email: soawes.dbarea@awesindia.edu.in

Note: It is mandatory to reside in accommodation inside AWES Campus.

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Last date for Submission of Application : 17.03.2026

To download eligibility criteria and other details, please log on to **www.kribhco.net** Click on About Us → Important Links-Tenders. For any further clarifications, you may contact **GM (Commercial).**

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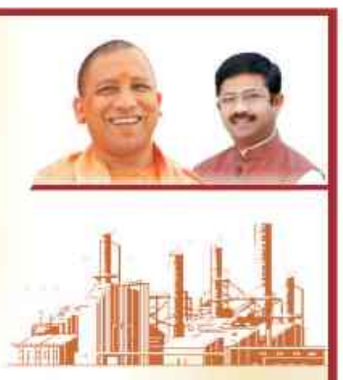

INDUSTRIAL PLOTS
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HOSPITAL – ALIGARH
PETROL PUMP, HOTEL – PRATAPGARH
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Registration and Document Download Begins : 02.03.2026, 10:00 AM
Last date for submission of Catalogue, Processing Fee & EMD by bidder: 18.03.2026, 06:00 PM
Last date for Final Online Documents Submission : 19.03.2026, 06:00PM
Online E-Bidding starts : 23.03.2026, 10:00 AM to 01:00 PM

Note : For registration & Other details please visit Auction Portal **https://upsida.project247.in/**

Industrial Plots are also available for allotment on **'Nivesh Mitra Portal'**

For Information regarding the registration & e-auction process -
Helpline No. Apoorva Patel-9106196864,
(Monday to Friday 10:00 AM to 7:00 PM and 1st & 3rd Saturday 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM)
Contact on Email: eauction@upsida.co.in, apurva@procure247.com

Uttar Pradesh State Industrial Development Authority
UPSIDA Complex, A-1/4, Lakhanpur, Kanpur-208024

Accel

CAUTION NOTICE AGAINST FRAUDULENT APPS AND SCHEMES

PUBLIC NOTICE

This caution notice is being addressed on behalf of our Client, Accel India Management LLP.

The general public is hereby cautioned that certain unknown individuals and agencies have been trying to mislead the public by posing as representatives of our Client/ Accel through various mobile applications, and WhatsApp groups. These individuals are soliciting investments under the pretext of being associated with our Client/Accel by fraudulently using the Accel trademark and impersonating Accel employees.

We wish to caution the genera public that our Client/Accel has never authorised any person or agency to solicit investments or collect funds on our behalf through any online platforms, including WhatsApp groups and does not solicit money from the public.

Please be advised that any person willingly corresponding with such individuals and agencies in any manner whatsoever will be doing so at their own risk, as to costs and consequences.

We wish to inform you that our Client has initiated legal proceedings against these individuals and agencies, and reserves the right to initiate any further legal action against all individuals involved in such fraudulent activity.

Krutika Raghavan Associates
on behalf of Accel India Management LLP
Krutika Raghavan Associates,
#416, Raheja Chambers, Museum Road,
Bangalore, Karnataka- 560001

GOVERNMENT OF PUDUCHERRY
DEPARTMENT OF HINDU RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS
SRI PRANAMBIGAI SAMEDHA
SRI DHARBARANYESWARA SWAMY DEVASTHANAM, THIRUNALLAR
SRI SANEESWARA BHAGAWAN ANUGRAHASTHALAM

SANI PEYARCHI FESTIVAL 2026
TRANSITS FROM AQUARIUS TO PISCES
06-03-2026 FRIDAY MORNING at 08.24 A.M.

Devotees can worship and receive blessings by using the e-Seva, e-Navagraha Shanthi Homam, and e-Kanikkai services available through the official website mentioned below. During the auspicious occasion of Sanipeyarchi, the following Archana's will be performed for the welfare and blessings of the devotee.

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Email : eotemples@gmail.com; sds.kkl@nic.in Phone : (04368) 236530

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Fees/ शुल्क: 3540/- (Including GST)
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Invites applications for the post of PRINICIPAL, AIFD, BENGALURU

Eligibility: As per UGC/AICTE norms. Complete details available on website: **www.aifd.edu.in.** Age 60 years and below as on **28th February, 2026.**

How to Apply: Eligible candidates to download the application form from website: www.aifd.edu.in. Application Form duly filled along with BIO-DATA and recent passport size photograph should be forwarded both soft and hard copies to the following addresses by **20th March, 2026.**

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Hardcopy by Registered Post to: Director, AWES Campus, Nagareshwara Nagenahalli, PO-Kothanur, Bengaluru-560077. Tel: 9743351553

CLOSE WATCH

Scientists have found a causal link between bad air quality and violence. A 11-year study in US found violent assaults in Seattle went up slightly whenever there was pollution in the area triggered by wildfires

SCIENCE OF THE TIMES

QUICK QUIZ

The biggest nuclear device ever detonated, Tsar Bomba, was tested in Oct 1961. The Soviet physicist who helped create the bomb later felt regret and became a rights activist. He would win the 1975 Nobel Peace prize. Who was he? Send answers to **scienceofthetimes@timesofindia.com**

Tree Rings Show 2022 Drought Worst In Centuries. Feb-May Precipitation Brings Water To Millions

Long, Dry Spring Season Puts Himalayan Rivers Under Stress

Neha.Madaan
@timesofindia.com

For centuries, the forests of western Himalayas have quietly recorded every wet spring and every failed one. This record can be found in the rings trees form annually. If winter and spring precipitation is good, the trees grow wider rings. When it fails, the rings narrow.

And when scientists studied this ancient data, one year stood out: 2022. Its spring was the driest in the western Himalayas, in at least 396 years.

Alarmingly, the scientists also found that the two decades from 2000 to 2022 were the driest sustained spring seasons in the region since early 1600s, an unprecedented drought.

"When you extend the record back nearly 400 years, 2022 emerges as the driest spring we've seen," said Pushpendra Pandey, a researcher from Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeosciences (BSIP) and lead author of the study, which used tree-ring samples from high-altitude deodars forests in Himachal Pradesh's Lahaul to reconstruct spring rainfall patterns from 1627. It was published recently in Science of the Total Environment.

The findings matter far beyond the mountains. Winter and spring precipitation from Feb to May feeds glaciers and sustains river flows before the monsoon. A sustained failure in this season threatens water availability downstream, where hundreds of millions rely on Himalayan-fed rivers.

"While long droughts did occur in the past, including part of the Little Ice Age, the period since 2000 stands out for both its intensity and duration," Pandey said. "The spring rainfall deficit during these years is nearly one-third below the long-term average."

BSIP scientist Mayank Shekhar said 2022 appears to be as an "extreme outlier". "Tree-ring data, ground studies and satellite reanalysis all converge on the same conclusion: that spring precipitation collapsed across the Western Himalayas that year," he said.

This drying, researchers said, is closely linked to large-scale shifts in atmospheric circulation rather than local factors alone. Warmer-than-normal sea surface temperatures in the tropical Indian Ocean and the western Pacific are associated with changes in the subtropical westerly jet, the high-altitude wind system that steers western disturbances into north India.

Western disturbances are responsible for most winter and spring precipitation in the western Himalayas. When the jet weakens or shifts northward, fewer moisture-bearing systems reach the region.

"In recent dry years, we see a consistent northward displacement of the westerly jet and stronger high-pressure ridges over Central Asia," Pandey added. "These are conditions that suppress rainfall over the Himalayas."

Satellites add one more layer to the picture. The study found a steady rise in outgoing radiation over the region during spring, a sign of low cloud cover. The highest values were recorded in 2022.

"This increase in outgoing longwave radiation reflects clearer atmospheric conditions over the Western Himalayas," said Bhupendra Bahadur Singh, a climate scientist in Pune-based IITM, who was part of the study.

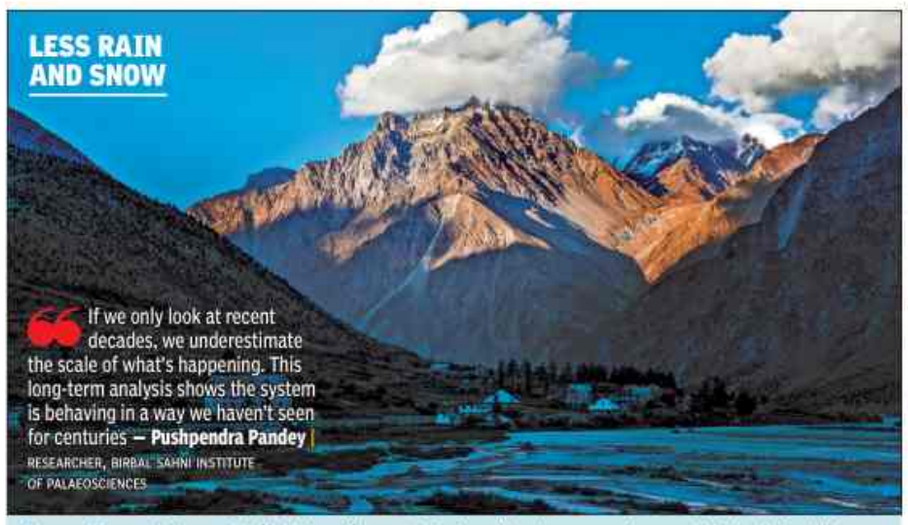
"Combined with changes in large-scale circulation, this points to fewer moisture-bearing systems reaching the region during spring."

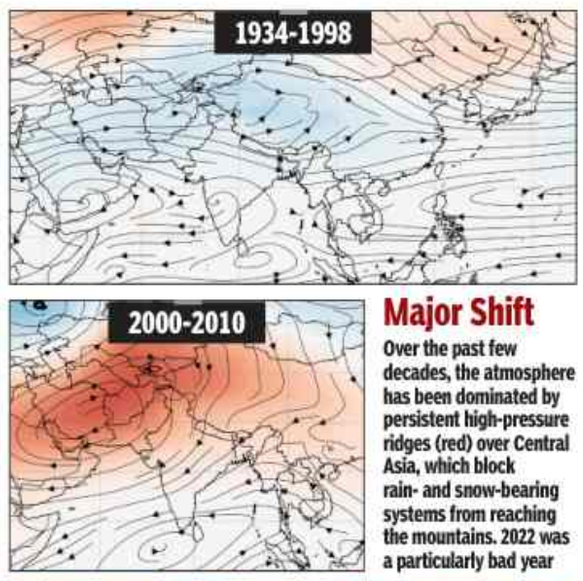
While the study does not directly attribute the trend to climate change, the authors said the alignment with ocean warming and atmospheric shifts was concerning. "The frequency of dry springs has clearly increased, which suggests we may be transitioning to a drier spring regime," said Parminder Singh Ranhotra, a BSIP scientist and co-author of the research.

Other studies show a similar shift, said M Rajeevan, former secretary at the ministry of earth sciences. "This drying during winter and spring is clearly evident in observational data. Several studies have linked this to a northward shift of the subtropical jet stream and changes in westerly circulation, which have reduced frequency of western disturbances over the Himalayas."

Netrananda Sahu, associate professor at Delhi School of Economics, said drying signals have also emerged from hydrological studies in the region. "Our research shows a consistent decline in rainfall, rising heat and decreasing snow depth, all of which reduce soil moisture across seasons," Sahu said, adding that the scale and persistence of recent drying suggested more than short-term variations. "Our analysis of IMD data from 1901 to 2021 shows a prolonged dry phase, and our field studies of spring-water sources in Himachal Pradesh, indicates growing stress on Himalayan water systems," he said.

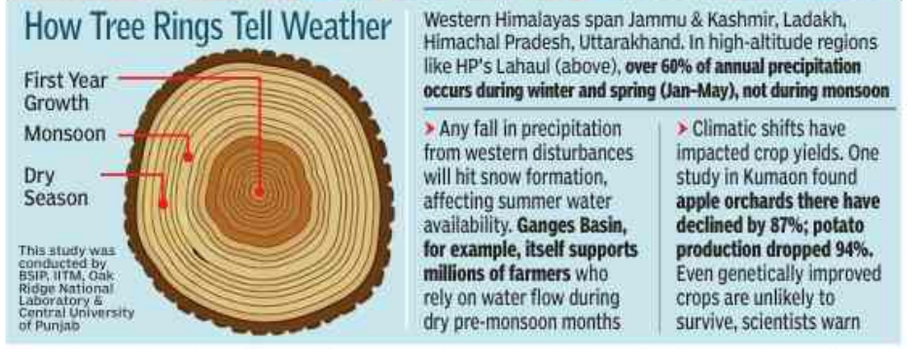
Pandey added that the findings underline the need to rethink how Himalayan water security is assessed. "If we only look at recent decades, we underestimate the scale of what's happening. This long-term perspective shows the system is behaving in a way we haven't seen for centuries," he said.





Major Shift

Over the past few decades, the atmosphere has been dominated by persistent high-pressure ridges (red) over Central Asia, which block rain- and snow-bearing systems from reaching the mountains. 2022 was a particularly bad year



Western Himalayas span Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand. In high-altitude regions like HP's Lahaul (above), **over 60% of annual precipitation occurs during winter and spring (Jan-May), not during monsoon**

- Any fall in precipitation from western disturbances will hit snow formation, affecting summer water availability. **Ganges Basin, for example, itself supports millions of farmers** who rely on water flow during dry pre-monsoon months
- Climatic shifts have impacted crop yields. One study in Kumaon found **apple orchards there have declined by 87%; potato production dropped 94%.** Even genetically improved crops are unlikely to survive, scientists warn

Why Humans Are The Only Primates With A Chin

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

For long, it has been a puzzle: How did chins form in humans? We're the only primates to have the protrusion, a small piece of bone extending from the jaw. Even our closest relatives – the extinct Neanderthals and Denisovans – didn't have chins. Sure, they walked on two legs, were known to have complex speech, made art, used tools but they didn't have chins.

Theories have attempted to explain this unique feature in modern humans.

One states chins formed to help us chew and support the lower jaw. But experts argued saying the chin was in the wrong place to work as such a support. Perhaps it was our speech, which needed this bony addendum, but scientists said it was unlikely the tongue generated enough force to form new skull parts.

Another theory suggests the chin evolved to help people find mates, but scientists were again doubtful: sexually selective features tend to develop in one gender, they said.

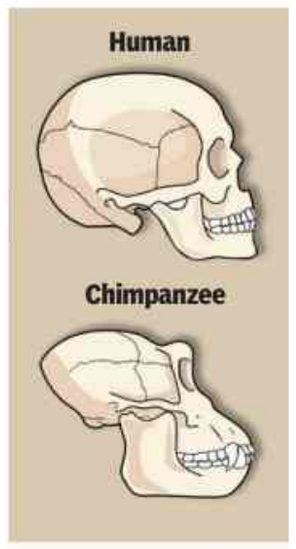
Now a new study in PLOS One, has backed a previously proposed hypothesis, which states the chin was incidental, or a "spandrel", a term borrowed from architecture that describes features that come up once the main structure is built, like the empty space that forms below a finished staircase. It's unintended, serves no specific purpose, yet formed as workers focused on the main thing — the staircase.

"The chin evolved largely by accident and not through direct selection, but as an evolutionary byproduct resulting from direct selection on other parts of the skull," said lead author of the new study Noreen von Cramon-Taubadel, a professor of Anthropology at University at Buffalo, US.

The "spandrel" theory of the chin is known, but it had pegged natural selection as the evolutionary driver of changes in the lower jaw. It's here that Cramon-Taubadel and her team deviated. They tested the "null hypothesis" of neutrality by comparing skulls of apes with humans' to see if evolution of the chin was random.

Cramon-Taubadel said: "While we do find some evidence of direct selection on parts of the human skull, we find that traits specific to the chin region better fit the spandrel model. The changes since our last common ancestor with chimpanzee are not because of natural selection on the chin itself but on selection of other parts of the jaw and skull."

Essentially, the human chin is the space under the staircase, according to these scientists, which formed incidentally when nature was busy constructing our main features.



Human chin was a byproduct, the study states, as we formed larger heads and smaller teeth

LAST WEEK'S QUICK QUIZ Question on Jan 23: Name the US fighter pilot who became the first and only person to shoot down a satellite from orbit with a missile fired from a plane **Answer:** Wilbert "Doug" Pearson. He scored the kill in an F-15 in September 1985

TIMES NATION

Undertrial dies after 'assault by inmates' at Mandoli prison

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: A 35-year-old undertrial in Mandoli Jail died on Sunday morning, five days after he was allegedly assaulted by other inmates during a brawl. Mohammad Azad was lodged in the prison since 2022 in connection with a case under NDPS Act.

Speaking to **TOI**, his brother Shakir said on Feb 24, a fight broke out inside the jail, during which some inmates, including Azad, were beaten up by others. He alleged that Azad was also assaulted by jail personnel.

The family said Azad's health deteriorated in the days following the alleged assault. "He could not speak clearly," Shakir said. On Feb 28, Azad was produced for a scheduled hearing at Karkardooma court. "He could not walk on his own when he was taken to the court," Shakir added.

The body was sent for a postmortem. The report is awaited. An inquiry has been launched, said a police officer

Early on Sunday, as Azad's condition worsened, he was taken to Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital, where doctors declared him brought dead. The hospital alerted Harsh Vihar police station. Azad's family was informed around 5.30am that he had been taken from the jail to GTB Hospital.

An inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the death is being conducted under BNSS Section 196, said a senior police officer. Police also said they are verifying the family's claims about the role of some jail personnel in the attack.

Azad worked in the scrap trade and is survived by his wife and children. With Eid approaching, the family said they had hoped he would be granted parole.

DMK got a full majority in 2021, but failed to deliver: PM Modi

▶Continued from page 1

The NDA in Tamil Nadu is led by the AIADMK, whose general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami was present at the state along with allies PMK president Anbumani Ramadoss, AMMK's TTV Dhinakaran and TMC's G K Vasan.

Modi invoked the names of Congress stalwart K Kamaraj, AIADMK icons M G Ramachandran and J Jayalalithaa, praising them for contributing to the growth of TN. "When it comes to honesty in politics, late K Kamaraj set an example for the whole country. However, DMK is an example of the exact opposite," he said.

Modi said that after 25 long years, DMK got a full majority in 2021, but failed to deliver good governance. "They looted the state, furthering dynastic politics and ignored people's aspirations," he said. He said Tamil Nadu was the first state to become "Congress-mukt". "For this, Congress avenged TN by ceding Katchatheevu (to Sri Lanka)," Modi said, alleging that DMK did nothing to prevent the handover of the islet.

Earlier, participating in a govt event, where he laid the foundation stone and inaugurated Rs 4,400-crore infrastructure projects, the PM said that the historic site of Adhichanallur in Tirunelveli district will be developed into a global heritage destination. Modi also inaugurated eight redeveloped railway stations at a cost of around Rs 105 crore.

Earlier in the day, the PM visited poll-bound Puducherry, where he inaugurated and laid foundation stone for multiple development projects worth more than Rs 2,700 crore. Addressing a gathering, he said DMK and Congress were speed-breakers of development in Puducherry. "We are investing more than Rs 30,000 crore in road projects in the East Coast Corridor up to Kanyakumari. These projects link parts of Puducherry to major economic hubs like Chennai, Bengaluru and Coimbatore and boost tourism, trade and industry," he said. He said the Union territory of Puducherry can become a medical tourism hub. "Puducherry already has nine medical colleges. The modernisation of the Regional Cancer Centre at Jipmer will further expand healthcare capacity," he said.

ANI

SEEKING BLESSINGS: Prime Minister Narendra Modi performs darshan and puja at Arulmigu Subramaniyaswamy Temple, in Madurai on Sunday

DMK govt tried to derail rally: BJP

Union minister Piyush Goyal on Sunday alleged that the DMK govt failed to provide adequate security in and around the NDA meeting venue. "I am at pain to share with you that the DMK government of Stalin is making every effort to try and stop the people of Tamil Nadu from coming to the public meeting of the NDA," Goyal told reporters in Madurai.

Tamil Puligal members detained

Madurai: Police detained several cadres of Tamil Puligal party for holding black flag protests in Madurai against the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, reports **T Singaravelou.**

Tamil Puligal protest was carried out near Kattabomman statue at Periyar bus stand around 11.30am, condemning the Union govt for denying nod for Madurai and Coimbatore metro rail projects, and the PM visit. Subsequently, police detained 73, including 13 women cadres.

Factory blast: Exact cause under probe

▶Continued from page 1

Some workers fled as parts of the structure collapsed and debris flew around.

"The incident occurred in the packing area, where no active manufacturing operations were under way at the time. The exact cause remains under investigation, and we are cooperating fully with the concerned authorities," SBL Energy said in a statement.

Due to severe burns and disfigurement, DNA sampling was required for identification, a process that officials said could take 48 hours. Relatives were called to assist in the process.

It is being scrutinised whether the unit had stored explosives beyond the sanctioned limit

PM Narendra Modi and President Droupadi Murmu expressed grief. Modi announced ex gratia of Rs 2 lakh each for the kin of the deceased and Rs 50,000 for the injured. CM Fadnavis declared aid of Rs 5 lakh each for the families of those who perished. SBL will provide separate compensation.

Later on Sunday, officials of the Centre's Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation (PESO) and others arrived at the site for a probe. PESO is scrutinising whether the unit had stored explosives beyond the sanctioned limit and whether certified non-sparking equipment was used. The agency is also verifying if mandated temperature and humidity conditions for handling explosives were maintained. Worker safety measures are also under the lens.

Min, others visit unit

Police had initially registered an accidental death case but modified it to one of culpable homicide not amounting to murder against SBL management after PESO officials and other experts submitted a preliminary report. Maharashtra minister Chandrashekhar Bawankule and others visited the unit. SP (Nagpur Rural) Harssh A Poddar vowed "transparent investigations".

Bare hands can peel off new road: Pilibhit villagers

Pilibhit: Residents of Bidhipur village in Pilibhit district have accused the public works department (PWD) of substandard construction on a newly built road, after demonstrating that its surface layer could be peeled off with bare hands, reports **Keshav Agarwal.**

Village pradhan Chet Ram said the 4.6km stretch, connecting Bidhipur crematorium to Gajraula village, was commissioned on Feb 5 through a registered PWD contractor, Yaqub Siddiqi, at an estimated cost of Rs 80 lakh. "A 220m section was built with cement concrete, while the remaining part was laid using bitumen and stone aggregates," he said.

Residents said they had filed a complaint two days ago with PWD executive engineer Rajesh Chaudhary and Pilibhit BJP MP Jitin Prasada, alleging substandard construction. Villagers said that despite this, there was no improvement in the quality of construction in accordance with the assigned standards and the work continued without a technical survey.

"This road was originally built a decade ago and has been repaired only once since then. It has caused considerable inconvenience for commuters, particularly in transporting crops to procurement points on tractor-trolleys. The poor quality of the newly repaired road will recreate the same problems," Chet Ram said.

Villagers said that despite their complaint, there was no improvement in the quality of construction and the work continued without a technical survey

Notably, departmental engineers are responsible for verifying the quality of work at every stage of road construction to ensure that the contractor complies with assigned standards.

While the executive engineer could not be reached for comment, district magistrate Gyanendra Singh said the administration would not let the quality of construction compromised under any condition. "A technical team will be deputed to physically verify whether the standards were followed. If the work is found substandard, stern action will be taken against the contractor, as well as the personnel of PWD liable for supervision and quality control," he said.

Mere presence with weapons not proof of plan to loot: Court

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The court acquits five accused in 2008 dacoity conspiracy case as the prosecution could not prove the charges against them

Vadodara: Eighteen years after they were arrested on the charge of planning a dacoity in the city, the city sessions court acquitted all five men. The court ordered the acquittal, as the prosecution could not prove the case against the accused.

In Jan 2008, the Detection of Crime Branch (DCB) registered an FIR of criminal conspiracy against five men and arrested them over their purported plan to rob a house on Vasna Road in the city. Police said the men were caught with tools used in burglary and some sharp-edged weapons. Police said the accused — Jarnel Singh, Bachhan Singh Sikligar, Kallu Singh Sikligar, Papa Singh Sikligar, and Sakunt Singh Sikligar — planned in advance to commit the crime and, that, they got special tools made for the purpose.

The court, though, observed that there is no entry in the station diary about the information received by police and, that, they did not even enter the vehicle number in which they went to the spot where the accused gathered.

The court also observed that the investigation was done by one of the officers who was a member of the raiding party, and it is expected that investigation be done by an officer not in the raiding party to show that the process is neutral. The court observed that police did not take statements from residents of the colony where the gang gathered, nor was any CCTV footage produced.

The court also said it cannot be assumed that, just because the men gathered at the spot with weapons, they were planning dacoity and dismissed the case observing that police failed to prove their case against the accused men.

"OTHER TEAMS HAVE EVOLVED TO THE DEMANDS OF T20, BUT NEITHER OUR TEAM NOR OUR PLAYERS MEET THOSE STANDARDS. IT IS LIKE OTHER TEAMS ARE PLAYING ON THE MOON AND WE ARE ON EARTH."
—Kamran Akmal, FORMER PAK 'KEEPER-BAT

FINALLY, IT'S JUSTICE FOR SANJU

Sublime Samson Belts 50-Ball 97, Helps India Chase Down 195 And Set-Up Semis Vs England In Mumbai

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Kolkata: Sanju Samson warmed the benches more often than he would have liked in his decade-long T20 International career. The India opener's talent was never in doubt, just that he didn't always utilize the opportunities that came his way.

On Sunday at Eden Gardens, another such opportunity landed in the 31-year-old's path and this time, he wasn't found wanting. Samson's commanding unbeaten 97 (50b, 12x4, 4x6) formed the backbone of India's 5-wicket win over the West Indies, and the ride into the ongoing T20 World Cup semi-finals. England are up next for Suryakumar Yadav's men, the first of the 2 steps that remain in their climb towards a historic title defence.

It was quite apt that Samson sealed it with a punch over mid-on.A target of 196 may seem daunting on the face of it, but when the chase is on a flat track and driven by batters who are capable of delivering, it doesn't seem all that challenging. That India made it look a little turbulent was primarily because Samson waged a lone battle for most of the innings. A 58-run stand with Surya (18) had Samson as the dominant partner. The 42 he added with Tilak Varma (27, 15b, 4x4, 1x6) was more on equal terms. Similar with Hardik Pandya (17), who survived a sitter, for the 38 for the 5th wicket.

The constant in all these partnerships was Samson, who displayed his array of shots, packing enough punch behind them. This innings is surely among the most memorable that Samson played, if not the defining one.

Earlier, the West Indies once more showed their tendency of falling apart when things seemed to be going perfectly for them. The discovery of this tournament is that they also have the batting depth to fight back. Jason Holder and Rovman Powell produced that fightback when the West Indies innings was in trouble.

Opening with Shai Hope and Roston Chase, they were off to a reasonable start, if not a flier.

A powerplay of 45 without any loss looked to be the kind of platform they could build on, of course with a little help from Abhishek Sharma, who dropped a simple chance from Chase off Bumrah when the batter was on 14. Losing Hope, who wasn't as fluent as Chase, in the ninth over at the score of 68 meant the West Indies still held the upper hand.

Hope's 32 off 33 balls would be disappointing for an opener who had the advantage of the powerplay. Chase was a lot more aggressive for his 40, and Shimron Hetmyer kind of made up for the lost ground with a rocking 12-ball 27. However, his innings proved to be just a cameo, being dismissed to the faintest of edges. That was in Bumrah's 2nd over and the innings' 12th. He accounted for Chase in the same over and suddenly the West Indies innings seemed to be falling apart. It was then that Holder and Powell came together to script a recovery. Their unbeaten 5th-wicket stand of 76 came in just 35 balls. Holder (37*, 22b, 2x4, 3x6), an asset to have in the lower order, continued from where he left against South Africa. Powell (34*, 19b, 3x4, 2x6) showed once again that his calm demeanour masks a fiery batter within.

The duo struck at the India bowlers, the best of them, Bumrah and Varun Chakravarthy, going for 36 and 40 respectively.

Perhaps it was Hope's scratchy innings that prevented the West Indies from crossing 200.

HOW THEY FINISHED

Teams	M	W	L	NR	Pts	NRR
Super 8s, Group 1						
SA	3	3	0	0	6	2.259
IND	3	2	1	0	4	0.106
WI	3	1	2	0	2	0.993
Zim	3	0	3	0	0	-3.415
Super 8s, Group 2						
Eng	3	3	0	0	6	1.09
NZ	3	1	1	1	3	1.39
Pak	3	1	1	1	3	-0.12
SL	3	0	3	0	0	-1.95

Note: Top-two teams from each group qualify for semis

Pics: Krishna Roy/PTI

SAVIOUR: Sanju Samson's classy 97 enabled India to chase down 195

CAMEO: Tilak Varma scored 27 in 15 balls

76 An unbroken stand between Jason Holder and Rovman Powell off 5.5 overs is West Indies' first 50-plus stand for the fifth wicket vs India in T20Is, eclipsing the 49 between Hetmyer and Shai Hope at Lauderhill on Aug 12, 2023.

195-4 West Indies have recorded their second highest total vs India in T20 World Cups behind the 196 for three at Wankhede Stadium, Mumbai, on March 31, 2016.

248 Runs at an average of 41.33 in seven innings, including two fifties, achieved by Shimron Hetmyer is a West Indian record in a T20 World Cup tournament, eclipsing the 230 (ave 38.33) in six innings by Marlon Samuels in 2012-13.

19 Number of sixes hit by Shimron Hetmyer in seven innings - a record by a batter in any edition of T20 World Cup, bettering the 18 in six innings by Pakistan's Sahibzada Farhan's 18 in six innings in this edition.

150 Rovman Powell has become the first West Indian batter to hit 150 sixes in 103 innings in T20Is, overtaking former captain and keeper-bat Nicholas Pooran's tally of 149 sixes in 97 innings.

—Stats: Rajesh Kumar

SCOREBOARD

West Indies: Shai Hope b Varun Chakaravarthy 32, Roston Chase c Suryakumar Yadav b Jasprit Bumrah 40, Shimron Hetmyer c Sanju Samson b Jasprit Bumrah 27, Sherfane Rutherford c Sanju Samson b Hardik Pandya 14, Rovman Powell not out 34, Jason Holder not out 37. **Extras:** (LB-1, W-10) 11. **Total:** (For 4 wkts, 20 Overs) 195. **Fall of Wickets:** 1-68, 2-102, 3-103, 4-119. **Bowling:** Arshdeep Singh 4-0-43-0, Hardik Pandya 4-0-40-1. Axar Patel 4-0-35-0, Jasprit Bumrah 4-0-36-2, Varun Chakaravarthy 4-0-40-1. **India:** Abhishek Sharma c Hetmyer b Samson 10, Sanju Samson not out, Ishan Kishan c Hetmyer b Holder 10, Suryakumar Yadav c Rutherford b Joseph 18, Tilak Varma c Hetmyer b Holder 27, Hardik Pandya c Holder b Joseph 17, Shivam Dube not out 8. **Extras** (lb 5, w 7) 9; **Total: (6 wkts in 20 Overs) 207/6; FoW:** 1-29, 2-41, 3-99, 4-141, 5-179 **Bowling:** Akeal Hossein 2-0-22-1, Matthew forde 3-0-22-0, Jason Holder 4-0-38-2, Gudakesh Motie 2-0-18-0, Romario Shepherd 2.2-0-34-0, Shamar Joseph 4-0-42-2, Roston Chase 2-0-18-0. **Result:** India won by six wickets

Jatin Kumar

1 Sikandar Raza (73 + 3/29) is the first captain to accomplish the double of a 50-plus and three wickets in the same T20 World Cup fixture. His efforts enabled him to bag his fifth Player-of-the-Match award in the T20 WC.

Zimbabwean skipper Sikandar Raza celebrates the dismissal of South African batter Dewald Brevis

SA subdue Sikandar brilliance, go to the semifinal unbeaten

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New Delhi: The individual brilliance of Zimbabwean skipper Sikandar Raza couldn't stop the South African juggernaut on Sunday. Despite resting three of their frontline bowlers for the inconsequential tie, the outcome remained unchanged for the South Africans as they registered a five-wicket win here at the Arun Jaitley Stadium.

With their seventh successive victory in the tournament, the Proteas topped Group 1 with six points and will now fly to Kolkata full of confidence to take on New Zealand in the first semifinal of the T20 World Cup on Wednesday. The South African back-up bowlers proved that they are good enough to step in if a need arises in the final stages of the tournament as their bowlers restricted Zimbabwe to 153 for seven on a pitch that offered indifferent bounce.

After hitting a blistering half-century to give Zimbabwe a total of respectability, the Proteas were given a scare by Raza with the ball early on, but they managed to overcome the initial jitters to knock off the runs in 17.5 overs losing five wickets.

The only challenge to the South African bowling attack was posed by Zimbabwean skipper Raza, who blazed his way to a sublime 73 from 45 balls. While the rest of the Zimbabwean batsmen struggled against the pace of the South African bowlers, or sometimes the lack of it, Raza seemed to be in a different mode. He strode out to the crease when Zimbabwe's best batsman of the tournament, Brian Bennett (15), was dismissed only for the second time in the World Cup by Anrich Nortje in the fifth over. For the next 11 overs, Raza dictated terms as he drove, pulled and cut the South African bowlers with disdain.

He took only three balls to settle down before launching himself against Corbin Bosch. He welcomed the big-built Proteas pacer to the attack with a four and a six of successive balls in the final over of the Powerplay.

After smashing eight fours and four sixes, Raza was finally dismissed by young pacer Kwena Maphaka in the 16th over of the Zimbabwean innings as he only managed a leading edge to a cutter and was caught by David Miller at cover point. Once Raza was dismissed, Zimbabwe managed just 27 runs off the last 23 balls. Maphaka was the pick of the South African bowlers as he finished with 2/21.

But Raza wasn't done yet. Opening the bowling, he struck off his third ball, having Quinton de Kock caught behind for a duck. He struck again in his next over by castling his opposite number, Aiden Markram (4), with a ball that kept low and managed to reduce the Proteas to 14 for two. But the others couldn't sustain the pressure. While Dewald Brevis 42 (18 balls, 2x4, 4x6) imposed himself on Zimbabwean bowlers with a counter-attacking innings, Ryan Rickelton (31, 22 balls) and David Miller (22, 16 balls) played cameos to get the job done.

Brief Scores: Zimbabwe 153/7 in 20 overs (Sikandar Raza 73, Clive Madande 26; Kwena Maphaka 21/2) lost to **South Africa 154/5 in 17.5 overs** (Dewald Brevis 42, George Linde 30; Sikandar Raza 29/3) by five wickets.

'FASTING GIVES YOU DISCIPLINE AND MAKES YOU STRONGER'

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New Delhi: It is the holy month of Ramadan, and Sikandar Raza, a devout Muslim who was born in Pakistan, fasted throughout the day for over one week. However, that did not stop the Zimbabwean skipper, who will turn 40 this April, from performing.

He was the standout player on the field in Zimbabwe's final T20 World Cup game against South Africa at the Arun Jaitley Stadium on Sunday. Although Raza's blazing 73 and three wickets could not carry his team to victory, he left a lasting impression. He finished the tournament as Zimbabwe's second-highest run-getter with 206 runs from six matches and also claimed five wickets.

Asked how he managed to keep his energy going while fasting, Raza said, "It's a misconception that fasting takes energy off you. If anything, fasting gives you discipline and makes you mentally and physically stronger. I stop eating and drinking at 5:22 in the morning and then at 6:23 in the evening I start eating again. So, it's just a matter of 13 hours. The previous games were 7 pm starts. So, it was touch and go, but the day game could be tough. But you don't feel any difference," he said.

Although Zimbabwe's World Cup campaign is over, he felt incredibly proud of his team's performance.

Poor tactics, faulty playing XI hasten Pak's exit

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When Pakistan look back at the 2026 T20 World Cup, they will remember it as one that got away. They had a lot running in their favour — staying put in Sri Lanka, playing matches on surfaces of their choice, winning important tosses — but they couldn't deliver what was expected of them: consistency. As a result, Salman Ali Agha's team is out of the competition before the semifinals, ensuring that the Sri Lanka leg of this World Cup ended on Saturday.

It's true that, the India defeat apart, they weren't exactly shambolic. The New Zealand wash-out and a Harry Brook classic played significant roles in them not making the semifinals, but then World Cups are decided by fine margins.

There were already talks about Agha's resignation from captaincy, and the right-hander said at the post-match press conference on Saturday that "such decisions shouldn't be emotional". "We will go back and take some time and then make the required decision," Agha said.

But he can't deny that there were some serious decision-making errors that hurt Pakistan in this World Cup. While, in the India game, their decision to win the toss and field at the Premadasa was suicidal, not bowling a second finger-spinner right after dismissing Abhishek Sharma in the first over was equally poor. But those decisions only cost Pakistan pride, because they managed to get into the Super 8s.

But there were enough hints in the first four games that Babar Azam was looking a misfit at No 4. Still, the Pakistan team management decided to persist with him, and it was his slow batting in the England game that was one of the reasons behind the defeat. In that match, Babar managed a 24-ball 25 and couldn't accelerate. Pakistan's 164-9 was taken down by Brook's century.

Agha, though, tried to defend the senior batter, who was finally dropped in the Sri Lanka game. "Babar had a different role in this World Cup. He was a No. 4 and we needed a batter who could come in the middle-order and give us stability and save us from collapse," the captain argued.

It took the decision-makers — coach Mike Hesson and captain Agha — the entire tournament to figure out that Fakhar Zaman is best suited as an opener. The attacking left-hander was finally given a go against Sri Lanka at the top of the order, where he smashed a 42-ball 84 that gave the team some hope.

"We make the playing XI based on conditions and situations. The captain and the coach make the 11 together. We had to win this game in 13 overs or win by 65 runs and play according to that. As for Fakhar, he didn't come to the tournament with good form, but yes, right now, you can say that he should have played the first four matches," Agha said.

According to the captain, it's the team's inability to take correct decisions in crunch moments that have hurt them in ICC tournaments. "Whenever there is pressure, our decision-making is not as good as it should be. When you come to the World Cup or ICC events, there is always pressure," Agha said, bluntly.

It may well have been a dig at the way Shaheen Afridi, the premier pace bowler, often let his team down at crucial junctures, bowling the wrong length. It almost cost them Saturday's game as well, when he conceded 22 trying to defend 28 off the last over.

Amidst the doom and gloom, the performances of Farhan with the bat and mystery spinner Usman Tariq should come as a breath of fresh air.

REASONS FOR PAKISTAN'S EARLY OUSTER

- A batting line-up over-reliant on Sahibzada Farhan and stuck in the past.
- Former captain Babar Azam struggled with a strike rate of just 112.34
- The middle order repeatedly collapsed in high-pressure games.
- Made tactical blunders against big teams like India where they elected to field on a spin-friendly pitch and introduced Usman Tariq late.
- The death bowling was poor too Against England, Pakistan failed to defend 165, allowing Harry Brook to smash a century. Even in the final win against Sri Lanka, Shaheen Afridi conceded 4, 6, 6, 6 in the final over, nearly losing a game they dominated.

WEST ASIA CRISIS PUTS ZIM TRAVEL PLANS IN LIMBO

New Delhi: Zimbabwe's engagement in the T20 World Cup is over but they are not sure when they will be able to head back home due to the war in West Asia.

The Zimbabwean players were supposed to fly out via Dubai in three batches from New Delhi in the early hours of Monday morning. But with the Dubai air space closed for now, they are waiting for clarity from the ICC on their departure. "You know you are going home, but how you are going home, when you're going home, you don't know. The conversations are happening in the groups. You can see that,"said Zimbabwe head coach Justin Sammons.

Sammons also said that some of the match officials who have completed their duties are flying out on Monday via Addis Ababa.

BCCI ropes in Zak to groom pacers

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New Delhi: The Indian cricket board (BCCI) has sought the services of Zaheer Khan to groom the next line of fast bowlers in the country. TOI has learnt that the former India fast bowler is slated to hold specialised training camps at the Centre of Excellence (CoE) in Bengaluru in the first week of March.

The CoE has been without a fast-bowling coach after Troy Cooley's four-year stint as a bowling coach finished in Dec as he turned 60. BCCI invited applications for the role on Feb 9. The board is yet to announce Cooley's replacement.

"A batch of fast bowlers has been invited from state associations for a special fast-bowling camp from Feb 28-March 2 at CoE in Bengaluru under the tutelage of Zaheer. Head of cricket at CoE VVS Laxman has taken keen interest in this initiative," a BCCI source told TOI.

"Zaheer is very keen on taking up coaching roles. He was involved with Lucknow Super Giants and believes he can help the next generation of cricketers. It's a good sign that a fast bowler of his stature has shown interest in BCCI programmes. However, it needs to be seen if he wants to take up a full-time job at CoE as it will require him to commit a lot of time away from his family," the source said.

India's fast-bowling resources have become thin over the last three years. The options in each format have been very few. The red-ball format particularly has been an area of concern for the selectors and the Indian team management.

Jayasuriya to quit as coach after SL exit T20 World Cup

Pallekele: Sanath Jayasuriya has decided to step down as Sri Lanka's head coach in the wake of his team's abysmal performance in the T20 World Cup. "My contract ends in June but I will go before that, I will be talking to Sri Lanka Cricket to decide my stepping down," Jayasuriya told reporters after Sri Lanka lost to Pakistan on Saturday.

"We should have done better, I am sorry and I apologize to fans," Jayasuriya, the player-of-the-tournament when Sri Lanka won the 1996 ODI World Cup, said.

He said Sri Lanka was badly hampered by the injuries to Wanindu Hasaranga, Matheesha Pathirana and Kusal Mendis. "Their replacements could not perform to the levels required," he added. PTI

Jacks, England's trump card in 'imperfect' campaign

Allrounder Has Four Player-Of-The-Match Awards In The T20 WC

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In 2023, the England team were in Antigua for three ODIs against West Indies, when a 5.2 magnitude earthquake rocked the Caribbean island in the early hours. An oblivious Will Jacks slept through those tremors. In Feb 2026, Jacks is now seeing England through shaky ground match after match.

The 27-year-old has emerged as the lynchpin of England's T20 World Cup campaign. Entrusted with the role of a finisher, he was central to England's four-wicket win over New Zealand in their Super 8 game in Colombo on Friday, a triumph earned with three balls to spare.

An unbroken seventh-wicket partnership off 44 from 16 balls with Rehan Ahmed transformed a precarious 117/6 in the 17th over, chasing 160, into a dramatic win. Jacks finished unbeaten on 32 from 18 balls, bagging his fourth Player of the Match award, and becoming only the second player to do so in a single edition of the T20 World Cup. With the ball, he also claimed two scalps to restrict the Black Caps to 159/7.

Across seven innings in this showpiece tournament, Jacks has compiled 191 runs at an average of 63.67 and chipped in with seven wickets with his off-spin.

Against Sri Lanka six nights ago, he triggered a sensational collapse, finishing with 3/22 after bowling in the Powerplay. It capped an all-round display, following impactful knocks of 39* and 53*against Nepal and Italy in the group stages.

Jacks In T20 WC	
Matches	7
Runs	191
Avg	63.66
SR:	176.85
Hs:	53*
Wkts	7
Best	3/22
Avg	22.14
SR	13.7
ER	9.68

"I'M THE EXTRA BOWLER AND THE EXTRA BATTER; IF I DIDN'T BOWL AND DIDN'T BAT, WE'D HAVE THAT PERFECT GAME THAT PEOPLE HAVE BEEN SPEAKING ABOUT... COMING INTO THE SEMI-FINALS, IF I DO NOTHING, I'M SURE WE'VE HAD A GREAT DAY"
—Will Jacks | ENGLAND ALLROUNDER

The allrounder admitted England's strength has been their ability to stay calm during important moments and make the correct decisions. "What we've done well is that in key moments, we've kept a calm and clear head," Jacks said after the win against New Zealand. He emphasized that England are not required to play their "perfect game" to lift the T20 World Cup. According to him, results outweigh flawless displays, especially in such an unpredictable format.

"We've won six of the seven games and qualified for the semifinal. At the end of the day, no one really cares (about the perfect game)," he added.

Before his exploits in this T20 World Cup, Jacks provided a glimpse of his credentials in the 2024 IPL, when he hammered a 41-ball century for Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) against Gujarat Titans. In that knock, he turbocharged from 50 to 100 in just 10 balls, helping RCB overhaul a 201-run target in 16 overs.

Jacks was only 11 when England lifted their only T20 World Cup in the Caribbean, with his childhood hero Kevin Pietersen named the player of the tournament. chance for him to do an encore.

SNAP SHOTS

K'taka's Shaina claims bronze

India's rising shuttler Shaina Manimuthu secured a bronze medal at the Dutch Junior International. Shaina, from Karnataka, saw her impressive run end in the semifinals, where she went down to China's Yi Qing Yin 17-21, 8-21 in 35 minutes.

AFC postpones West Region Champions League games: The Asian Football Confederation has postponed continental club championship playoffs scheduled in the Middle East this week in response to the US and Israel attacks on Iran.

Lewandowski to miss Copa semis: Barcelona striker Robert Lewandowski will miss his team's Copa del Rey semifinal clash against Atletico Madrid with a fractured eye socket, the Catalan giants said. "Lewandowski picked up an injury in the recent game against Villarreal. Tests have diagnosed a fracture of the left eye socket," said Barcelona in a statement. "He will miss the game against Atletico Madrid."

Takele defends Tokyo Marathon title: Ethiopia's Tadese Takele successfully defended his Tokyo Marathon title on Sunday, edging Kenya's Geoffrey Toroitich in a sprint finish to cross the line in 2hr 3min 37sec.Takele finished with the same official time as Toroitich after a dramatic battle for the line, with Kenya's Alexander Mutiso just one second further behind in third place. Kenya's Brigid Kosgei won the women's race in 2:14:29, a new course record. Ethiopia's Berukan Welde was second in 2:16:36, followed by her countrywoman Hawi Feysa in 2:17:39.

Doncic shines: Luka Doncic celebrated his 27th birthday with 26 points, eight assists and six rebounds to lead the Los Angeles Lakers to a 129-101 rout of the Golden State Warriors in an NBA game on Saturday in San Francisco. **Results:** Charlotte 109 bt Portland 93; Miami 115 bt Houston 105; Toronto 134 bt Washington 125; LA Lakers 129 bt Golden State 101; New Orleans 115 bt Utah 105.

RVCE prevail: RVCE registered a six-wicket victory against ATRIA IT in the MS Ramaiah memorial-inter engineering college cricket tournament on Saturday. **Brief scores: CMRIT: 149/8 in 30 overs** (Sakath 37, Aryan 29; Shree Charan 2-22) lost to **MSRIT A: 153/2 in 19.4 overs** (Vishnu G Goudar 56, Rudra Singh 41); **ATRIA IT: 151 in 28 overs** (Saideep 64, Samith 50; Praiyush 4-29, Kausthab 2-21) lost to **RVCE: 152/4 in 22.1 overs** (Adarsh Rangappa 60, Kaustubh 58; Kounlya 2-4).

City to host two ATP Challenger 50 events: Bengaluru is set to host back-to-back ATP Challenger 50 events at the SM Krishna Tennis Stadium from May 11-17 and 18-24.

Stars stranded in Dubai as West Asia erupts

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Dubai: The Irish Village, with its cluster of restaurants and pubs, was buzzing last Sunday. There was live music and tennis played on the big screen. The 70s hit Jolene, Jolene drifted across the grounds. Nestled on the edge of the Dubai Duty Free

IN THE CROSSFIRE

Stadium, home to the WTA 1000 and ATP 500 events that had electrified crowds for the past fortnight, the eateries had been a magnet for fans soaking in the final days of top-tier tennis in the desert.

Just 24 hours after the last ball was struck, however, Al Garhoud, a stone's throw from Dubai International Airport, the world's busiest hub for international travel, feels eerily deserted. A space that had been a stage for movement and noise now resembles a ghost town.

All this against the backdrop of sharply rising tensions in the West Asia after coordinated US and Israeli strikes on Iran triggered widespread Iranian missile and drone retaliation. It led to major airspace closures and had hubs such as Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Doha grappling with thousands of cancelled or suspended flights.

AFP

WAITING GAME: Andrey Rublev

I arrived here to cover the tournament, expecting to catch a late-evening flight home on Saturday. Instead, that flight was cancelled, and the city has turned into an unexpected holding bay, with thousands of stranded travellers anxiously refreshing airline apps and scrambling for alternatives from a region where, as of now, every route seems blocked.

Even world-class players such as Andrey Rublev and Daniil Medvedev now find themselves stalled with the Indian Wells Masters set to begin on March 4. Rublev, a semifinalist in Dubai, cut a solitary figure as he walked through the hotel lobby in Al Garhoud, perhaps wishing he had headed to the airport soon after his loss to Tallon Griekspoor on Friday.

Conversations with fellow travellers and UAE residents all revolve around the same question, "Did you hear?" Drones, missiles, and the escalating tension dominate every exchange. Saturday night brought a restless, anxious few hours, punctuated by government alarms blaring at midnight. When the alarm sounded, the instinct wasn't to evacuate, rather sit in stunned silence, wondering what would come next. Regional sport has been further disrupted by the decision of the England and Wales Cricket Board to cancel the England Lions' 50-over match against Pakistan Shaheens and postpone the England women's training camp in Abu Dhabi.

As the region faces mounting uncertainty, sports, travel, and daily life have been thrown into turmoil, a stark reminder of how quickly global events can be disrupted by geopolitical crises. For athletes, fans, and travellers alike, schedules are shattered, and normalcy feels distant as West Asia navigates a tense and unpredictable chapter.

TOI Journalist Writes First Person Account From The City Under Seige

India cagers stuck in Doha

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Nagpur: The Indian men's basketball team was left stranded in Doha, Qatar, on Saturday after flight operations were suspended owing to escalating tensions in the Gulf region. After losing 73-99 to hosts Qatar on Saturday, India suffered their 3rd straight loss in the Asian qualifiers for the 2027 FIBA Basketball World Cup, and the team was heading to Beirut on Sunday to face Lebanon in Window 2 of the qualifiers.

The game between India and Lebanon that was scheduled on Tuesday, has now been postponed to June. While Indian hoopsters are

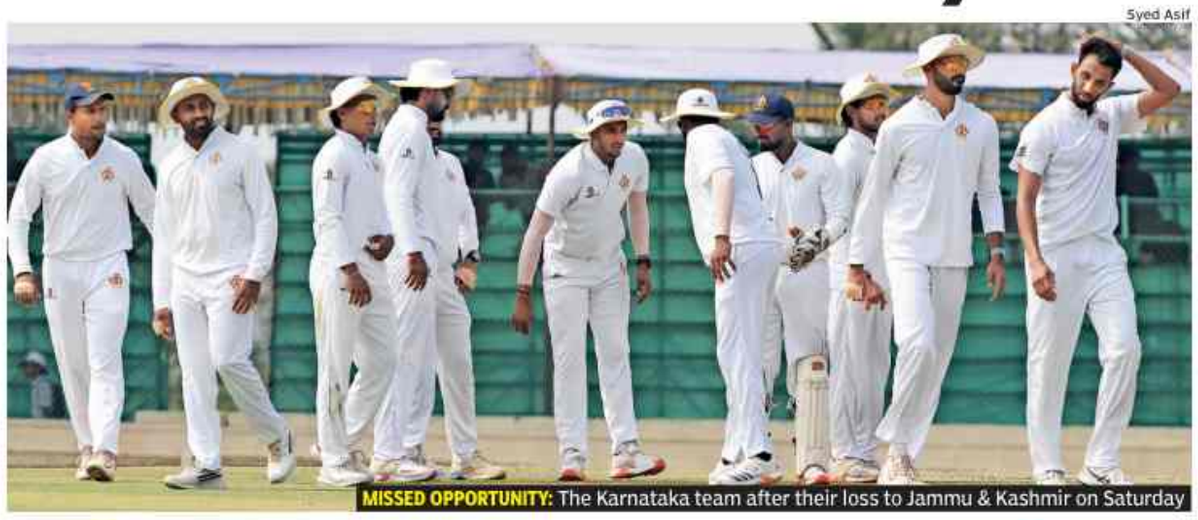
UNCERTAIN TIMES

stuck at Doha, the national teams of Iran, Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Saudi Arabia have been stranded in Lebanon. Due to the tensions between Iran and Israel all the teams were playing their respective 'Home and Away' games in Lebanon.

India's American head coach Scott Flemming, who resigned as the national coach and was moving back to the US after the game against Lebanon, is also stuck in Doha. In a chat with TOI, Flemming said, "We all are doing fine so far. Just don't know when the air space will open." If the air space opens on Tuesday, the Indian team can head back home from Doha itself.

STRONG START, SOUR FINISH

Syed Asif



MISSED OPPORTUNITY: The Karnataka team after their loss to Jammu & Kashmir on Saturday

Loss In The Final Exposes Karnataka's Missing Edge

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Hubballi: About an hour and a half before Devdutt Padikkal and Jammu and Kashmir skipper Paras Dogra shook hands to end Karnataka's five-day ordeal in the Ranji Trophy final here on Saturday, the home team walked out onto the field with surprising lightness.

Shoulders did not droop and disappointment did not hang heavy. There was banter and laughter instead. It wasn't that the pain of a misfired title bid had disappeared — it was just that Karnataka had effectively lost the battle nearly 48 hours earlier and had time to come to terms with it.

Karnataka were first batted out of the contest before the Jammu & Kashmir bowlers shut the door firmly on their hopes, bringing the curtains down on a campaign that had been a rollercoaster ride. From topping the table in the early phase of the tournament, Karnataka were pushed into a fight for survival in their final league encounter against Punjab. From there, they fought their way into the final with impressive knockout wins over Mumbai and Uttarakhand in the quarterfinal and semifinal respectively.

Those victories, however, masked shortcomings — particularly in the bowling department. The pace attack, once a potent weapon in Karnataka's armoury, lacked the cutting edge needed to win a championship.

Across 10 matches, Karnataka used as many as seven pacers, who collectively claimed 75 wickets in nearly 700 overs — numbers that fell short of title-winning standards. In contrast, Jammu & Kashmir's two frontline pacers — Aquib Nabi (60 wickets) and Sunil Kumar — picked up a combined 91 wickets in just 471.5 overs.

While Karnataka did play on several spin-friendly surfaces — with leg-spinner Shreyas Gopal finishing with 48 wickets — the absence of

RANJI TROPHY

a reliable seam-bowling workhorse was evident. V Koushik had filled that role of a bowler who could hold up an end effectively in previous seasons before moving to Goa this year, and his absence was keenly felt.

In the final — Karnataka's first in over a decade — the pacers needed to apply sustained pressure with disciplined stump-to-stump bowling. Instead, in the first innings especially, they strayed short and wide too often. Prasidh Krishna finished with a five-wicket haul, but even that failed to stem the flow of runs.

Head coach Yere Goud acknowledged the shortcomings, even as he pointed to moments that could have turned the tide.

"On the opening day, we could have bowled better and taken more wickets. If we had restricted J&K to about 400, things could have been different. We also weren't consistent enough in bowling the right areas," Goud admitted, adding that edges falling short and bails refusing to dislodge also hurt their chances.

With the bat, apart from Mayank Agarwal's fighting 160 in the second innings, the famed Karnataka lineup failed to deliver in the final. Over the course of the season, however, the batting unit had produced strong returns. Youngster R Smaran led the charts with 950 runs, while Padikkal (543 runs) and Karun Nair (699 runs) were also consistent contributors. Smaran (227n.o), Padikkal (232) and Karun (233) all registered double centuries during the campaign.

Karnataka also struggled early in the season to settle on a stable opening combination, with Nikin Jose and KV Aneesh partnering Mayank before KL Rahul slotted into the role later.

Padikkal, who took over the captaincy from the experienced Mayank before the crucial Punjab game, conceded that Jammu & Kashmir had been the better side in the final. "It was up to us to really step up. Unfortunately we weren't able to do that and they played much better cricket than us," he said.

Despite the disappointment, Padikkal remained optimistic about the future, especially with several young players gaining valuable experience.

"I'm really happy with the way the boys have played. There are a lot of young guys coming through and for them to reach a Ranji Trophy final so early in their careers is something special. I'm sure this will motivate them to improve with this season under their belts," he added.

With the season over and the trophy cabinet empty, Karnataka now face a period of reflection — and rebuilding — as they look to return stronger across formats next season.

Batting

R Smaran

M	Runs	HS	100	50
9	950	227*	4	3

Karun Nair

9	699	232	2	3

Mayank Agarwal

10	678	160	2	4

Bowling

Shreyas Gopal

M	Wkt	Eco	BBI	5 w	10 w
10	48	2.79	8/110	2	2

Shikhar Shetty

8	22	2.83	6/61	1	–

Vidwath Kaverappa

6	21	–	5/51	1	–

The turning point for J&K at Wankhede

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Hubballi: In 2014, as Jammu & Kashmir grappled with their worst floods in six decades, cricket became a source of solace and a rare spark of joy amid the devastation. It was also the period that marked the beginning of a competitive turnaround for the state team.

Former J&K coach and India spinner Sunil Joshi, who was in Hubballi earlier this week, watched the Ranji Trophy final unfold with mixed emotions. His home team, Karnataka were being dominated by a side he had once helped build.

It was under Joshi's mentorship that J&K beat Mumbai in their backyard at the Wankhede stadium, a moment that was awakening to the potential of a team that was lower down the pecking order in the domestic circuit. The end result was the title triumph here on Saturday by Paras Dogra & his men.

"It was all about planning. Since we were playing in Mumbai, we had a three-week pre-season camp in Nagpur," recalled Joshi.

Explaining how they countered the Suryakumar Yadav-led Mumbai side to register a memorable four-wicket win, Joshi said preparation and adaptability were the key.

"They hadn't played much competitive cricket at home, so our players tried to feel at home wherever they went and made the best use of the conditions and resources available," he said.

Joshi also tapped into one of Jammu & Kashmir's natural strengths — their fast bowlers.

"The pacers from J&K come from high-altitude regions and have greater lung capacity and endurance, which we utilised. They were able to bowl long spells effortlessly and trouble the Mumbai batters," he explained.

That famous win proved to be a turning point. "The dream of winning the title began there," Joshi said.

'LIVE COVERAGE HAS HELPED'

Former J&K all-rounder Samiullah Beigh, who was part of that 2014-15 squad, believes a key aspect that has worked in J&K's favour is the live broadcast of domestic matches.

"Live coverage of domestic matches has helped J&K. Earlier, we often ended up on the wrong side of umpiring decisions against stronger teams. Now, with a wider audience watching and the use of DRS, there is far greater fairness," he said.

TOI

BACK IN THE DAY: Former J&K skipper Parvez Rasool (left) with then coach Sunil Joshi in 2015

Sindhu may be forced to miss All Eng

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Hyderabad: Former world champion **PV Sindhu** faced a torrid time after explosions rocked the Dubai International Airport late on Saturday. The two-time Olympic medallist and her Indonesian coach Irwansyah Adi Pratam were stranded at the airport on their way to Birmingham for the All England Championships.

The ace shuttler and her team were shaken by the unexpected developments and she described the experience as scary. Sindhu is scheduled to compete in the All England Open Super-1000 tournament which begins in Birmingham on Tuesday. Sindhu arrived in Dubai to take a connecting flight to London but got stuck after airspace was closed.

With several airlines announcing suspension of flights at least until 3 pm on Monday and the attacks on UAE continuing, it may be difficult for Sindhu to reach Birmingham in time. The first rounds of the Super-1000 tournaments are scheduled for Tuesday and Wednesday. Even if the organisers schedule Sindhu match for Wednesday, it remains to be seen whether the former world No. 2 can reach the venue in time.

Australia complete series whitewash

Healy Quits ODI Cricket On A High With 158 Against India

IANS

FAREWELL: Indian players give a guard of honour to Alyssa Healy

Hobart: Captain Alyssa Healy bid adieu to ODI cricket on a glorious note, smashing a rampaging 158 as Australia whitewashed India 3-0 in the series with a 185-run thrashing of the world champions in the third and final match here on Sunday.

It was a fairytale ODI swansong for the 35-year-old Healy as her 158 and Beth Mooney's unbeaten 106 powered Australia to a mammoth 409 for seven after being asked to bat. Chasing a massive tar-

CRICKET

get of 410, India were all out for 224 in 45.1 overs to lose the three-match series 0-3.

Healy will draw curtains to her illustrious international career after playing the one-off pink-ball Test in Perth against India from March 6. She has accumulated 3777 runs from 126 ODIs, hitting eight centuries and 19 half tons.

Australia lost Phoebe Litchfield (14) early but Healy and Georgia Voll (62 off 52) shared 134 runs for the second wicket to take Australia forward. Healy and Mooney then stitched 145 runs for the third wicket to hand Australia a launching pad for the big score.

Playing in her 126th ODI, Healy decorated her eighth ODI century with as many 27 boundaries and two maximums from the 98 balls she faced. Voll hit seven fours and one six during her knock, while Mooney's knock was studded with 10 hits to the fence and one six.

For India, Sneh Rana (2/66) picked up two wickets while Shree Charani (2/106) became only the third bowler to concede 100-plus runs in an ODI.

Brief scores: Australia: 409/7 in 50 overs (Alyssa Healy 158, Georgia Voll 62, Beth Mooney 106 n.o; Shree Charani 2-106, Sneh Rana 2-66) bt **India: 224 all out in 45.1 overs** (Pratika Rawal 27, Jemimah Rodrigues 42; Alana King 4-33, Georgia Wareham 2-3). PTI

Marijne names fresh faces for WC Qualifiers

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In his first press conference after taking over the reigns of India women's national hockey team earlier this year, coach **Sjoerd Marijne** spoke highly of the youngsters in the camp.

He had said, "I am very happy with the talent, selected six from juniors and the clear reason is their performance." And the Dutch-

HOCKEY

man named quite a few of them in the team that will take part in the World Cup qualifiers to be held in Hyderabad from March 8-14.

Among them there are two new faces, too, in Annu and Ishika. Hailing from Haryana, Annu played a pivotal role during the 2023 Junior Asia Cup in Kakamigahara, Japan, scoring 9 goals in 5 games. She had also played in the 2023 Junior World Cup and scored 7 goals in six matches. As for Ishika, she plays as a forward and scored two goals during the Junior World Cup held in Santiago, Chile, in Dec last year Meanwhile, as reported Savita was not available for selection.

Squad: Goalkeepers: Bansari Solanki, Bichu Devi Kharibam. **Defenders:** Sushila Chanu, Pukhrambam, Nikki Pradhan, Manisha Chauhan, Udita, Ishika Chaudhary. **Midfielders:** Neha, Salima Tete, Sunelita Toppo, Sakshi Rana, Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke, Rutaja Dadaso Pisal, Deepika Soreng. **Forwards:** Navneet Kaur, Ishika, Lalremsiami, Beauty Dungdung, Baljeet Kaur, Annu.

Odisha, CFC share points

Bhubaneswar: A second-half header from captain Carlos Delgado ensured Odisha FC earn a 1-1 draw against Chennaiyin FC in an Indian Super League match at the Kalinga Stadium, here on Sunday.

Chennaiyin broke the deadlock at the stroke of half-time. In the second minute of added time, Farukh Choudhary delivered a pre-

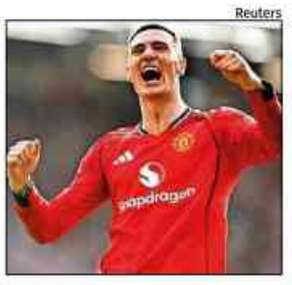
ISL

cise corner from the left, and the unmarked Elsinho rose highest to power a header into the net, handing the visitors a 1-0 lead. The equaliser arrived from a set-piece in the 68th minute.

In another match played in Mumbai, a late equaliser by Lallianzuala Chhangte helped Mumbai City FC secure a 1-1 draw against NorthEast United FC. PTI

Man United climb to third

Reuters



ECSTATIC: Benjamin Sesko

Benjamin Sesko stretched his hot streak with the winning goal as Manchester United beat Crystal Palace 2-1 to go third in the Premier League, while Tottenham failed to dispel relegation fears after defeat at Fulham.

Sesko was handed his first start in seven games since Michael Carrick took charge at Old Trafford and rewarded his boss with another vital goal to edge United clos-

FOOTBALL

er to a return to the Champions League. Palace had taken an early lead at Old Trafford when Maxence Lacroix outmuscled Leny Yoro to guide in a header from Brennan Johnson's corner.

But United hit back to remain unbeaten under Carrick and take their tally to 19 points from a possible 21. The game swung on one incident as Lacroix was sent off and conceded a penalty for pulling back Matheus Cunha just before the hour mark. Bruno Fernandes confidently stroked the resulting spot-kick past former team-mate Dean Henderson. Fernandes was then the creator for the second as his curling cross was powered in by Sesko.

Tottenham remain perilously poised just four points above the relegation zone as interim boss Igor Tudor again failed to halt their alarming slide after a 2-1 defeat at Craven Cottage.

Meanwhile, Antoine Semenyo fired Manchester City to a gritty 1-0 win over Leeds on Saturday. Semenyo netted late in the first half at Elland Road with his sixth goal since signing from Bournemouth in January.

BAYERN MOVE 11 POINTS CLEAR

Harry Kane scored twice and Joshua Kimmich bagged a late winner as Bayern Munich came back to triumph 3-2 at Borussia Dortmund on Saturday and move 11 points clear in the Bundesliga.

Select results: German league: Stuttgart 4 (Undav 21, Leweling 30, 42, Nartey 90+5) bt Wolfsburg 0; On Saturday: Borussia Dortmund 2 (Schlotterbeck 26, Svensson 83) lost to Bayern Munich 3 (Kane 54, 70-pen, Kimmich 87). **Spanish league:** Elche 2 (Aguado 42, Mir 90-pen) drew withy Espanyol 2 (Garcia 7, Romero 57); Valencia 1 (Ramazani 67-pen) bt Osasuna 0. AGENCIES

Dean & Gagan finish in style

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Newly-crowned Indian National Rally champions **Dean Mascarenhas** of Mangaluru and co-driver Gagan Karumbaiah of Kodagu rounded off the season in style with a comfortable victory in the sixth and final round of the FMSCI

MOTORSPORT

Indian National Rally Championship (INRC) 2025, held in Nashik on Sunday. Having sealed the National title with a round to spare at Indore last month, the duo delivered another dominant performance to cap a memorable campaign. Abin Rai of Madikeri wrapped up the junior INRC title. At the same time, the Ladies Class battle went down to the wire with young Tarushi Vikram of Chikkamagaluru claiming her maiden National title in her debut full season.

Provisional final results (Only K'taka): Overall: 1. Dean Mascarenhas, (M'lore)/Gagan Karumbaiah (Kodagu, 01 hour, 19 minutes, 53.2seconds); 2. Kama Kadur (B'luru)/Musa Sherif (Kasargod, 01:22:00.8); 3. Philippos Matthai (Delhi)/Harish KN (B'luru, 01:24:40.2). **INRC2:** 1. Philippos/Harish (01:24:40.2); 2. Daraius Shroff (Mum)/Arjun Dheerendra (B'luru, 01:24:44.0); 3. Pragathi Gowda/Chandramouli (Both Bengaluru, 01:24:47.7). **INRC3:** 2. Abhin Rai (Madikeri)/Jasheer Moideen (Chikkamagaluru, 01:27:50.0); 3. Tarushi/ Vybhav Mukund (B'luru, 01:28:06.0). **INRC 3T:** 3. Thejas Reddy/SSB Arjun (Both B'luru, 01:30:42.2). **Junior INRC**: 1. Abhin; 2. Tarushi Vikram (Chikkamagaluru) **Ladies Class:** 1. Tarushi. **Classic Challenge winner:** Satish P (B'luru)/KR Rishikesh (Thrissur, 01:40:46.2) **Gypsy winner:** Sanjay Agarwal/Dheeraj Manae (Both B'luru) (01:34:58.5). **Provisional National Champions of INRC 2025 (Only K'taka): INRC overall**: **Driver:** Dean; **Co-driver** Gagan. INRC2: **Driver:** Jason Saldanha, (M'lore); **Co-Driver**: Milen George (Kottayam). **Junior INRC**: Abhin. **Ladies Class:** 1. Tarushi. **Challenge Cups: Classic cars: Driver:** Siddhartha Santosh (B'luru); **Co-driver:** Sawan Sathyanarayan **Gypsy: Driver:** Sanjay Aggarwal; **Co-driver:** Dheeraj Manae (Both B'luru)

Gukesh held by Navara

Prague (Czech Republic): World champion D Gukesh's hunt for his first victory continued as he was held to a draw by David Navara of Czech Republic in the fourth

CHESS

round of the Prague International Chess Festival here.

On a day when Jorden van Foreest of Holland nosed ahead of the field with his third victory in four games, defending champion Aravindh Chithambaram went down fighting against Vincent Keymer of Germany.

Van Foreest defeated Nodirbek Yakubboev while the other two games in the 10-player round-robin tournament ended in draws. American Hans Moke Niemann drew with Parham Maghsoodloo of Iran and David Anton Guijarro drew with Nodirbek Yakubboev.

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Stranded at Dubai International Airport, PV Sindhu may miss the All England Championships which starts in Birmingham on Tuesday, P 16

OFFICIALS THAT IRAN HAS CONFIRMED HAVE BEEN KILLED

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei
Iran's supreme leader for more than three decades, he had turned Iran into a regional power, expanding the country's hardline Islamist & anti-Western policies

Gen Mohammad Pakpour
Commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, he had replaced Gen Hossein Salami, who was killed by the Israeli strikes during the 12-day war in June

Gen Aziz Nasirzadeh
Iran's defence minister. In Jan, during the widespread anti-govt protests in the country, he had said the authorities would use all their resources to 'crush savage armed terrorists'. Thousands of Iranians died in the demonstrations

Sayyid Abdolrahim Mousavi
Chief of staff of Iran's armed forces, had served in a range of roles in the military before being appointed to lead the armed forces after the assassination of his predecessor, Mohammad Bagheri, during the 12-day war last year

Adm Ali Shamkhani
A senior adviser to Khamenei. After the Israelis attack in June, the former supreme leader created a National Defense Council to manage military affairs during wartime that was headed by Shamkhani

CIA Helped Pinpoint A Gathering Of Iranian Leaders. Then Israel Struck

Despite Iran's Preparation For War, Israel Managed To Achieve 'Tactical Surprise'

Julian E Barnes, Ronen Bergman, Eric Schmitt & Tyler Pager

Washington: Shortly before the US and Israel were poised to attack Iran, the CIA zeroed in on the location of perhaps the most important target: Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the country's supreme leader.

The CIA had been tracking Khamenei for months, gaining more confidence about his locations and his patterns, according to people familiar with the operation. Then the agency learned that a meeting of top Iranian officials would take place Saturday morning at a leadership compound in the heart of Tehran. Most critically, the CIA learned that the supreme leader would be at the site.

The CIA passed its intelligence, which offered "high fidelity" on Khamenei's position, to Israel, according to people briefed on the intelligence. They and others who shared details about the operation spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive intelligence and military planning. Israel, using US intelligence and its own, would execute an operation it had been planning for months: the targeted killing of Iran's senior leaders.

The US and Israeli govts, which had originally planned to launch a strike at night, made the decision to adjust the timing to take advantage of the information about the gathering at the govt compound in Tehran on Saturday morning. The leaders were set to meet where the offices of the Iranian presidency, the supreme leader and Iran's national security council are located.

Israel had determined that the gathering would include top Iranian defence officials, including Mohammad Pakpour, the commander in chief of the revolutionary guard; Aziz Nasirzadeh, the minister of defence; Adm. Ali Shamkhani, the head of the military council; Seyyed Majid Mousavi, the commander of the revolutionary guard aerospace force; Mohammad Shirazi, the deputy intelligence minister; and others.

The operation began around 6am in Israel, as fighter jets took off from their bases. The strike required relatively few aircraft, but they were armed with long-range and highly accurate munitions. Two hours and five minutes after the jets took off, at around 9.40am in Tehran, the long-range missiles struck the compound. At the time of the strike, senior Iranian national security officials were in one building at the compound. Khamenei was in another nearby building.

"This morning's strike was carried out simultaneously at several locations in Tehran, in one of which senior figures of Iran's political-security echelon had gathered," an Israeli defense official wrote in a message, reviewed by NYT.

The official said that despite Iranian preparations for war, Israel managed to achieve "tactical surprise" with its attack on the compound.

On Sunday, Iran's state news agency, IRNA, confirmed the deaths of two high-level military leaders Israel said it had killed Saturday: Shamkhani and Pakpour.

Last June, with planning underway to strike Iran's nuclear targets, President Donald Trump asserted that the US knew where Khamenei was hiding and could have killed him. That intelligence, a former US official said, was based on the same network that the US relied on Saturday.

But since then, the information the US has been able to gather has only improved, according to the former official and others briefed on the intelligence. During that 12-day war last year, the US learned even more about how the supreme leader and the revolutionary guard communicated and moved while under pressure, the former official said. The US used that knowledge to hone its ability to track Khamenei and predict his movements.

The US and Israel had also gathered specifics about the locations of key Iranian intelligence officers. In follow-on strikes, locations where intelligence leaders were staying were hit, according to people familiar with the operation. Iran's top intelligence officer escaped, but the senior ranks of Iran's intelligence agencies were decimated, according to people briefed on the operation. NYT

FROM DIPLOMACY TO STRIKES: HOW US DECIDED TO GO TO WAR

IANS/X/@WhiteHouse

Weeks of assembling of an armada of carriers and destroyers by the US in its allied bases in West Asia was a giveaway that war was in the offing

War room | Trump and his team monitor US military op against Iran on Saturday

Aim | Put pressure on Iran to give up their nuclear and long-range missile programmes

President Trump's advisers Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff, held multiple talks, mediated by Oman till as late as Thursday to convince Tehran to agree to US demands

HOW DID THE FINAL DAYS SHAPE UP?

4 days to strike | In his State of the Union speech, Trump warned that Iran was 'again pursuing its sinister ambitions' to reconstitute their nuclear programme. He was adamant: 'No nuke for Iran'

Israel's inputs | While US defence intelligence agency said Iran's nuclear progress remained constrained, Israeli intelligence suggested urgency

2 days to strike | By Thursday afternoon, the Kushner-Witkoff talks in Geneva had failed to reach a breakthrough

Iran Was Positive | Iranian officials believed the second round of talks showed progress. But Kushner and Witkoff felt otherwise. In their view, Khamenei's world-view left little room for co-existence with Trump's vision for the region. Sticking to their 16-hour deadline, the Americans flew back to Washington

Day Before Strike | While more talks were planned, Oman foreign minister Badr Albusaidi was alarmed. On Friday, he flew from Geneva to Washington to meet VP JD Vance thinking he might still have the president's ear on Iran. But this move infuriated Trump advisers who saw it as an attempt to split the president's inner circle

Trump was unhappy Trump, on a visit to Texas, was briefed that while a short-term deal with Iran seemed within reach, it wouldn't address core issues like Tehran's missile programme. Trump later said, 'not happy with the state of the negotiations'

Photos: Bloomberg, Getty Images

Scene in Washington Vance gathers with cabinet members. Secy of state Rubio informs senior US lawmakers that military action against Iran was likely

Day of Strike A video of Trump, recorded without reporters and released in the middle of the night (US time), announces attack on Iran

Source: Bloomberg

Sly Saudi-Israel alliance set up US attack on Iran

Chidanand Rajghatta | TNN

Reuters/File

President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Sunday killing of Khamenei is a 'declaration of war against Muslims' and avenging Khamenei is a 'right and obligation' of Iran

In the volatile chessboard of West Asian and Gulf politics, few alignments have been as striking as the quiet convergence between Sunni-majority Saudi Arabia and Jewish state of Israel over the question of Shia-dominated Iran.

Long divided by ideology, history, and the unresolved Palestinian question, the two countries have found common cause in what they view as Tehran's expanding arc of influence — and in the months leading to Washington's military strike on Iran, their parallel lobbying efforts in the US reached an intensity rarely seen.

According to media reports, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman made multiple private phone calls to US President Trump over the past month advocating a US attack, despite his public support for a diplomatic solution, including pledging, following a phone call with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, that Saudi airspace or territory would not be used in an attack on Iran.

In his discussions with US officials, the Saudi leader actually warned that Iran would come away stronger and more dangerous if the US did not strike now, the Washington Post reported on Sunday, suggesting a double game.

For Riyadh, the calculus is rooted in a decade-long rivalry that is as much geopolitical as it is sectarian. Saudi Arabia, the self-proclaimed leader of the Sunni Arab world and custodian of Islam's two holiest mosques, sees Iran's revolutionary Shia theocracy as a direct ideological and strategic challenger. Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Tehran has sought to export its model of governance and build influence through a network of allied militias and political movements across the region — from Iraq to Lebanon and Yemen.

Israel's motivations, though framed differently, converge on the same focal point: Iran's nuclear ambitions and its sponsorship of armed groups hostile to the Jewish state. Israeli leaders have long warned that a nuclear-capable Iran would alter the regional balance irreversibly. Over time, that concern evolved into a broader campaign to curb Iran's regional footprint, including its support for Hezbollah in Lebanon and militias in Syria.

The unusual alignment between Riyadh and Jerusalem was not born overnight. Shared intelligence assessments, quiet security dialogues, and a mutual anxiety about US retrenchment in West Asia laid the groundwork. Both capitals viewed Washington's earlier diplomatic outreach to Tehran as a strategic error that legitimised Iranian power without constraining its regional activism. As Iran's influence deepened in Baghdad, Damascus, and Beirut, Saudi and Israeli officials amplified their warnings in Washington, arguing that deterrence had failed and that only decisive action could reset the equation.

According to the Post, the US attack came despite intelligence assessments in Washington that Iran's forces were unlikely to pose an immediate threat to the US mainland within the next decade.

The motivations behind Tel Aviv and Riyadh urging a US strike are layered. Saudi Arabia sought to blunt Iran's capacity to project power into the Arab heartland and to re-assert its own claim to leadership in the Islamic world. Israel aimed to degrade Iran's military infrastructure and nuclear facilities, buying time and restoring what it calls credible deterrence. For both, an American strike offered the advantage of overwhelming force without the political and military costs of unilateral action.

Yet the implications are profound and unpredictable. West Asia's sectarian map remains a fault line. Iran is the largest Shia-majority country, but significant Shia populations also reside in Iraq, Bahrain, Lebanon, Pakistan, and parts of Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province. Sunni-majority states — including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, and most Gulf monarchies — have historically aligned, formally or informally, to counterbalance Iranian influence. An attack on Iran risks hardening these divides. In Iraq, where a Shia-led govt governs a fractured polity, public opinion could tilt sharply against Washington and its Gulf partners. In Lebanon, Hezbollah would face pressure to respond, potentially widening the conflict.

At the ideological level, the strike intensifies the contest for leadership of the Islamic world. Saudi Arabia's claim rests on religious custodianship and financial clout; Iran's rests on revolutionary legitimacy and its narrative of resistance against Western and Israeli power. A US-led attack — especially if perceived as encouraged by Riyadh — may allow Tehran to recast itself as the aggrieved defender of Muslim sovereignty, potentially galvanising Shiacommunities and even segments of Sunni opinion disillusioned with Gulf monarchies.

The energy dimension adds another layer of global consequence. Iran sits astride the Strait of Hormuz, a chokepoint through which roughly a fifth of the world's traded oil passes. Even limited military exchanges in or near the waterway could disrupt shipping lanes, spike insurance costs, and send crude prices soaring.

For Washington, the decision to act — under pressure from two unlikely partners — underscores the enduring pull of West Asianalliances on American policy, now driven by Trump principals with deep financial ties to Riyadh. The deeper story is not merely about a military strike. It is about a struggle for regional primacy in a fractured Islamic world. In aligning to confront Iran, Saudi Arabia and Israel have reshaped regional diplomacy.

Foreign workers in Gulf appear to be most affected

▶Continued from P1

It is really a tough and serious moment," said Cinzia Bianco, a visiting fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations who focuses on the Gulf. "There was nothing that they valued more than that perception of safety..."

Dubai had cultivated close ties with Iran, partly in an effort to maintain its safe-haven status; the Emirates is one of Iran's largest trading partners. But not a single Gulf country was spared. Even Oman — where officials had mediated talks between Iran and the US — was attacked. A drone hit housing at Duqm, a port on Arabian Sea, injuring one foreign worker, according to state news agency.

Foreign workers, who make up a large proportion of the population in the Gulf countries, appeared to be among the most affected. In Kuwait, a drone struck the airport, injuring nine workers, the country's state news agency reported. In Abu Dhabi, debris from an intercepted drone fell on the international airport, killing one "Asian national" and injuring seven people, the airport authority said. Debris from a falling drone also struck the facade of Etihad Towers — a complex that contains the Israeli embassy in Abu Dhabi.

At least 16 people were injured in Qatar, the country's interior ministry said. The Qatari defence ministry said on Sunday that it had intercepted 18 ballistic missiles fired across the country. In Bahrain, govt said it had shot down 45 missiles and 9 drones. NYT & AGENCIES

Khamenei had planned for transition of power

Before the American and Israeli bombs started falling on Saturday, Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the authoritarian centre of the theocratic regime for nearly 40 years, had planned for a transition of power in the event of his death.

Now it appears that his plans will be put to the test.

The Iranian govt said on Sunday that US-Israeli attacks on Iran had killed Ayatollah Khamenei. A short time later, the Iranian state news agency IRNA said that Iran's president, the head of the judiciary and a jurist of the Guardian Council would be in charge during the transition period, without detailing what comes next.

Last June, during the 12-day war with Israel, when Ayatollah Khamenei was in hiding, he named three candidates who could be appointed swiftly to succeed him. The supreme leader must be a senior Shia cleric and scholar appointed by a committee of clerics known as the Assembly of Experts.

The three candidates Khamenei said he preferred for the role of supreme leader, based on interviews with six senior Iranian officials and two clerics who did not want to be identified, are the head of the judiciary, Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Eje'i; Ayatollah Khamenei's chief of staff, Ali Asghar Hejazi; and Hassan Khomeini, a moderate cleric from the reformist political faction who is a grandson of Ayatollah Khomeini. The Israeli military said that Hejazi had been killed.

Ayatollah Khamenei's son Mojtaba, who has been a powerful figure in the shadows, is favoured by some factions, but Khamenei told followers that he did not want the post of supreme leader to be hereditary. Also, his fate is unclear right now. His wife was confirmed killed in a strike on Saturday and there has been no certain news as to whether he died too.

Reuters

A woman mourns Khamenei during a pro-govt rally in Tehran on Sunday

Ahead of Saturday's airstrikes, Ayatollah Khamenei took precautions to prepare the country and the regime for survival. He delegated the running of the country to one of his closest allies, the veteran politician Ali Larijani, who is the head of the national security council and has effectively sidelined Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian.

"We will make the Zionist criminals and the dishonourable Americans regret it," Larijani said on Saturday. "The brave soldiers and the great nation of Iran will give the international tyrants who are going to hell an unforgettable lesson." Khamenei had also authorised a small circle of political and military allies to make decisions if he were to be killed, and named four layers of succession for senior military and political figures whom he personally appoints, according to senior Iranian officials.

They include his chief of staff, Hejazi; Brig Gen Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, the speaker of the parliament and former commander of the Revolutionary Guards Corps; and his top military adviser and former commander in chief of the Guards, Gen Yahya Rahim Safavi. It was unclear early Sunday who was in charge. NYT

In Iraq, police fired tear gas & stun grenades at protesters

▶Continued from P1

The demonstrators also set a vehicle ablaze outside the main gate and clashed with police, he said. "We are in constant touch with consulate officials. They are all safe," Hemnani added.

Iran's neighbours to the east and west, Pakistan and Iraq have the world's largest Shia Muslim populations after Iran, and were the scenes of some of the worst unrest. Thirty-four people were injured, police said. Karachi's civil hospital said all those killed and injured were hit with gunshots. Protesters also took to the streets in other parts of Pakistan.

In Islamabad, all roads leading to the 'Red Zone', which houses diplomatic missions were blocked to traffic, police said. Police fired tear gas and live bullets when thousands of protesters tried to march toward the diplomatic enclave, killing two and injuring 10, two officials said. In Iraq, police fired tear gas and stun grenades to scatter hundreds of pro-Iranian protesters who had gathered outside the 'Green Zone' diplomatic compound in the capital Baghdad, where the US embassy is located. REUTERS

AP

Protesters throw stones at security personnel in Karachi on Sunday

Khamenei sought to turn Iran into a regional powerhouse

The 36-year rule of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei built Iran into a powerful anti-US force, spreading its military sway across West Asia, while using an iron fist to crush unrest at home. He was killed on Saturday, aged 86, Iranian state media announced Sunday, in air strikes by Israel and the US.

Khamenei dramatically remoulded the Islamic Republic since he took the reins after the death of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in 1989. He ended up ruling far longer than Khomeini expanding the Shia clerical class and built the paramilitary revolutionary guard into the most important body underpinning his rule.

Ali Khamenei was born into a religious family in the northeastern holy city of Mashhad, a hotbed of revolutionary fervour during the struggle against the Western-allied shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. He studied under Khomeini at the seminary in the holy city of Qom before Khomeini's exile to Iraq and France.

Khamenei joined the anti-shah movement, facing time in both prison and in hiding. When Khomeini returned to Iran in triumph in 1979 and proclaimed the Islamic Republic, Khamenei was appointed to the secretive revolutionary council. In 1981, he was elected Iran's third president; that same year, a bombing by opponents left him with one hand paralysed.

After being named supreme leader after Khomeini's death, he bounded overnight to the level of grand ayatollah, at the top of the hierarchy, and for years had to deal with scepticism over his credentials. Khamenei acknowledged the doubts with humility. Khamenei stabilised Iran after the 1980s war with Iraq and governed for over three decades. Hard-liners considered him second only to God in his authority. Khamenei created an ever-growing bureaucracy of Shia clerics and governmental agencies that left him as the ultimate arbiter.

Under Khamenei's reign, Iran shifted fully from conventional warfare to support for proxies, building the so-called 'Axis of Resistance' to advance its interests in the region. Khamenei's first major challenge came in 1997, when pro-reform politicians gained control of parliament and cleric Mohammad Khatami was elected president by a landslide. The reformists demanded a loosening of the strict social rules imposed by the revolution. Khamenei-backed hard-liners moved to contain the liberal movement, fearing it would eventually call for an end to clerical rule. His regime was marred by several protests seeking reforms.

He remained deeply suspicious of the US, referring to it as the "Great Satan". He shrugged off US sanctions and pushed ahead with Iran's nuclear program, which the US and its allies say hid a secret project to build a nuclear weapon up until 2003. Khamenei vowed the country would never give up its right to develop "peaceful nuclear energy programme." Western powers made attempts to discourage Khamenei to obtain the same. The ongoing conflict in which Khamenei was killed has roots in Iran's quest to go nuclear. AGENCIES

Trump threatens Iran against retaliation

▶Continued from P1

Blasts in Tehran sent a huge plume of smoke into the sky in an area where there are govt buildings. Iranian authorities say more than 200 people have been killed since the start of the US and Israeli strikes that killed Khamenei and other senior leaders. Iran's Revolutionary Guards announced a "large-scale" attack on Sunday, and blasts were heard in Riyadh, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Doha, Manama, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

The strikes and counterattacks underscored how the killing of Khamenei, and Trump's calls for the overthrow of the decades-old Islamic Republic, carried the potential for a prolonged conflict that could envelop West Asia. It's the second time in eight months that the US and Israel have teamed up to use military force against Iran, and a startling show of military might for an American president who swept into office on an "America First" platform and vowed to keep out of "forever wars."

"You have crossed our red line and must pay the price," Iran's parliamentary speaker, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, said in a televised address Sunday soon after Khamenei's killing was announced. "We will deliver such devastating blows that you yourselves will be driven to beg."

Trump warned that any retaliation would only lead to further escalation. "THEY BETTER NOT DO THAT," Trump fired back in a social media post. "IF THEY DO, WE WILL HIT THEM WITH A FORCE THAT HAS NEVER BEEN SEEN BEFORE!" Israel's defence minister Israel Katz said Israel will have "a non-stop air train" of strikes against military and leadership targets in Iran.

Though Trump called on Saturday for the Iranian people to "take over" their govt, there was no sign in Tehran or elsewhere of unrest. AGENCIES

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THE TIMES

INCLUSIVE OF BANGALORE TIMES |

INDIA & CANADA ARE LIKELY TO SIGN ECONOMIC PACT BY YEAR-END, CANADIAN PM MARK CARNEY SAYS IN MUMBAI ON EVE OF DELHI MEET WITH PM MODI

THE NIGHT SANJU BECAME SAMSON

➤ **Sanju Samson** wasn't India's first-choice opener when the WC began. He only got into the XI because India wanted to break the glut of left-handers at the top. But on Sunday, he made a superb **97 off 50 balls (highest by an Indian in a T20 WC chase)** to help India (199/5) beat West Indies with 4 balls left and book a **semifinal clash with England on Mar 5. South Africa will play New Zealand in the other semi on March 4**

➤ Windies captain Shai Hope's laboured 32 off 33 balls at the top proved costly for his team. As their innings gained momentum, **Jasprit Bumrah** bowled a **superb 12th over in which he took 2 wickets for just 4 runs** to stall their recovery. Bumrah finished with 4/36

➤ Jason Holder scored an unbeaten 37 off 22 balls and Rovman Powell 34 n.o off 19 as West Indies managed to reach 195/4. India needed to mount their **highest successful run chase ever in a T20 World Cup match to win** – which they managed thanks to Samson

FULL COVERAGE P 15

PM visits home of devotee who led lamp stir, slams DMK for 'insensitivity'

K.Kaushik & Bosco.Dominique

Madurai/Puducherry: PM Modi, who kicked off NDA's campaign for the Tamil Nadu assembly election with a rally in Madurai on Sunday, visited the house of a devotee who ended his life here recently seeking lamp-lighting rights at the Deepathoon atop Thiruparankundram hill and attacked the state's DMK govt for "insensitivity".

Before the rally, Modi visited the famous temple at Thiruparankundram, where he spent around 15 minutes and offered prayers.

Addressing the NDA rally later, the PM said, "My heart felt heavy," referring to Poornachandran, who died by suicide on Dec 18. He said he met Poornachandran's wife Indumathi as well as his sons. Modi accused DMK

ANI

PM Modi at a temple in Madurai

govt of involvement in a number of scams. "Usually, ministers compete in delivering good work. However, in DMK, ministers compete in scams. They are stealing from the poor, from youth, from farmers," he said. "Such a corrupt govt has no moral right to continue. That's why the people of TN have decided to bring in an NDA govt. We will give clean and efficient governance."

▶'Failed to deliver', P 14

18 killed in explosion at Nagpur detonator mfg unit, 18 critically injured

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Nagpur: At least 18 workers, most of them women, were killed and 24 others injured — 18 of them critically — on Sunday in a devastating blast that ripped through a private firm's detonator manufacturing unit near Nagpur.

The blast at SBL Energy Ltd's unit in Katol's Raulgaon village, 30km from Nagpur, came a day after at least 20 people were killed in a massive explosion at a firecracker unit in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh's Kakinada in the state's biggest such tragedy in recent memory.

How the Nagpur explosion occurred remains unclear, with the company saying the cause is "under investigation". Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis ordered a probe, describing the blast as "extremely unfortunate and tragic".

Aniruddhasingh Dinore

SBL Energy's unit after the blast, about 30km from Nagpur

The explosion occurred around 7am in the factory's detonator crimping (packing) section during the morning shift when 40-45 workers are usually on duty. Large sections of the plant turned to rubble, with towering flames and thick black smoke visible from a distance.

▶Investigation starts, P14

Official booked for issuing 10k FCs without inspection

A senior transport inspector in Bangalore Central RTO has been booked for allegedly issuing fitness certificates (FCs) to 10,210 vehicles from other states without conducting inspections. The irregularities came to light after the Gujarat transport department notified Karnataka authorities. P 3

Know Namma Karnataka?
SCAN THE O!
Scan the QR & answer the quiz question. Correct answer will be revealed tomorrow!
*T&C Apply
Yesterday's answer: Nikhil Kamath

Kejriwal: Vindicated by 'historic' verdict, arrest meant to send a message

New Delhi: Aam Aadmi Party national convenor Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday launched a sharp attack on the BJP-led central govt at a rally at Jantar Mantar, claiming that 140 crore Indians will unite to uproot a "dictatorial regime".

This was the party's first big public gathering in Delhi since it had been defeated in 2025 assembly polls, **report Abhinav Rajput & Meghna Dhulia**.

Addressing AAP functionaries, workers and supporters, Kejriwal said the "historic" verdict in the liquor policy case on Feb 27 vindicated him and made it clear that he was, is and will remain "*kattar imaandar* (staunchly honest)" despite repeated allegations of corruption levelled against him by PM Modi.

He said his arrest was meant to send a message that anyone working honestly would meet the same fate and was an attempt to discourage educated youth and ordinary citizens from entering politics.

▶Kejriwal slams PM, P 8

'Don't celebrate yet, case will go to HC'

Delhi CM Rekha Gupta hit out at Kejriwal, saying "those shouting in his defence should understand the pot of deceit will not be put on the stove again in Delhi". She said Kejriwal should not celebrate his acquittal in liquor policy case as the matter will now go to Delhi HC. Instead, he will have to answer for several "scams", she added. P 8

JSW Steel fails to meet ore target, loses ₹127 crore

Karnataka govt has encashed JSW Steel's performance-security deposit and imposed a penalty for failing to meet the minimum iron ore production requirement at its Chitradurga mining block. Mines and geology officials said the lease was executed in 2019 for a 94-hectare ore block. The move came after SC recently declined to stay the state's decision to encash bank guarantees worth Rs 127 crore. P 4

K'taka to fill 56k vacancies: no breach of ceiling

Karnataka govt has decided to fill over 56,000 vacancies by not exceeding 50% quota ceiling as it scrambles to launch recruitment process in line with the promise made by CM Siddaramaiah. The department of personnel and administrative reforms issued an order on Saturday to this effect, asking departments to set aside 2% and 4% jobs for SCs and STs, subject to HC's final order. P 4

WC hero, ex-footballer, 3 ministers among 60L voters under SIR cloud

Sarthak Ganguly, Roshan Gupta & Subhro Maitra

Kolkata/Siliguri/Malda: Wicketkeeper Richa Ghosh was one of the stars of India's ICC World Cup-winning women's team. Footballer-turned-coach Mehtab Hossain played for India in 31 games over nine years. Shashi Panja, Md Ghulam Rabbani and Tajmul Hossain are ministers in the Mamata Banerjee govt. Yasin Pathan won a presidential award, Kabir Puraskar, in 1994 for helping protect West Midnapore's 18th-century terracotta temples.

All six are among 60 lakh-odd voters who discovered this weekend that they may not be allowed to vote in the next assembly election.

Bengal's final electoral rolls, published Saturday after months of SIR heartburn, placed them "under adjudication" – a legal holding pen where a judge will decide, case by case, whether each name belongs.

▶Contd on: Inside flap

BENGAL 'IN ADJUDICATION' GALLERY

For 3rd year in a row, state stares at outlay cut

Anticipating revenue shortfall, the state govt is likely to downscale the budget outlay for the current fiscal — third in a row — to Rs 3.95 lakh crore from Rs 4.1 lakh crore. The shortfall has prompted a review of expenditure. CM's economic adviser Basavaraj Rayareddi, while confirming that the outlay is expected to be revised to around Rs 3.95 lakh crore, pegged the shortfall at Rs 18,000 crore. P 4

Economic pact with India likely by year-end: Carney

West Asia May Also Figure In Meet With Modi Today

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: India and Canada are likely to sign a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) by the end of this year, Canadian PM Mark Carney said in Mumbai ahead of his arrival in Delhi for a bilateral meeting with PM Narendra Modi on Monday.

In Mumbai, Carney had several business engagements, meeting Indian and Canadian CEOs, industry and financial experts, innovators, educators as well as Canadian Pension Funds based in India.

"This is an enormous opportunity for both our countries... but it is one that is about to move to the next level. We should aim much higher, and to be more strategic in our partnership. And that's why, immediately after my election last year, our govt set out to renew our relationship with India," he said in India's financial capital, during the first leg of his first official visit to India.

Modi and Carney had agreed on the margins of the G7 summit in Canada to restart efforts to pave the way for a free trade agreement. Apart from the expected progress in CEPA negotiations, a multi-billion-dollar agreement for procurement of uranium by India from Canada is likely to be one of the major takeaways from the visit.

PTI

Mark Carney and wife Diana arrive in New Delhi on Sunday night

"I invited PM Modi to the G7 Summit in Canada. When he came a few weeks later, we agreed to re-engage across security, energy and technology. A few months later, at the G20 Summit in Johannesburg, PM Modi and I launched a landmark partnership with Australia on critical minerals and technology," Carney said.

Modi and Carney are also likely to discuss the fallout of the war in West Asia. Unlike India, Canada has backed the US's action against Iran's nuclear programme.

During this visit, Canada is focused on core areas where it can work together with India to create greater sovereignty, greater choice and greater prosperity for our people, Carney said. "That naturally begins with food and energy, given Canada's position as a food and energy superpower," he said, adding that it also extended to nuclear cooperation, from being the most reliable long-term supplier of uranium for building large-scale reactors and small modular reactors.

I gave every document: Richa's father

▶ Continued From Page

Richa, also an officer of the rank of DSP in Bengal Police, was training in Bengaluru during the SIR and could not appear in person for a hearing. "I submitted every required document on her behalf. She will reapply, if needed," said her father Manabendra Ghosh. Her elder sister Somshree is also in the "adjudication" category.

The chief electoral officer's office acknowledged receiving the documents but said the returning officer concerned "did not dispose of the case".

Mehtab said he was "shocked" to find his name being flagged in the final rolls. "My name appears in the 2002 electoral rolls. I have been told I am under adjudication because of 'Mohd' being added to my name on the voter card," he said. "I have all documents required to prove my identity as an Indian."

Panja, minister of women and child development and social welfare, said she suspected her name was placed under adjudication "deliberately", pointing out that her husband and their two daughters made it to the final list with identical documents.

Boy and girl found hanging from tree in UP

Kanpur: The bodies of a missing boy and girl, both aged 17, were found hanging from a tree at Gopiyapur village in UP's Etawah on Sunday morning. Police said the initial probe indicated it was a case of double suicide. They said the two were in a relationship.

Farmers stumbled upon the bodies near an orchard in Gopiyapur and informed their families, who notified police.

Police said the two studied together till Class IX. The girl's family recently arranged for her to get married in another village on May 6.

Police sent the bodies for postmortem and are questioning the families. TNN

'Deeply regret,' says Harvard for 'Hinduphobic' Sanskrit post

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Harvard University has issued a formal apology after a social media post promoting its Elementary Sanskrit course triggered sharp criticism from sections of the Hindu community, with the artwork used in the post labelled "Hinduphobic" and culturally insensitive.

In a statement posted on its website on Feb 27, the university said it "deeply regrets the posting of an insensitive image" in relation to the Sanskrit programme and confirmed that the artwork had been withdrawn. The statement was issued on behalf of the department of South Asian Studies.

The controversy centred on an artwork titled 'Master of Puppets', created by Indian artist Anirudh Sainath under the brand Molee Art. The image, which some social media users said drew on themes from the Mahabharata and Krishna's Ras Leela, was criticised for its dark, "horror-movie" aesthetic.

The artwork titled 'Master of Puppets' by Indian artist Anirudh Sainath drew on themes from Mahabharata and Krishna's Ras Leela. It was criticised for its 'horror-movie' aesthetic

The Coalition of Hindus of North America (CoHNA) accused the university of portraying Sanskrit — described by the group as "Hinduism's sacred language" — in a "dark, manipulative and oppressive manner". In posts on X, the organisation called the visual a symbol of "blatant Hinduphobia" and said it appeared "straight out of a horror movie".

Responding to the backlash, Harvard said the department had a "long and celebrated" history of teaching Sanskrit and remained committed to the language and its intellectual and cultural traditions. It added that it was reviewing its internal social media process to "ensure future posts more accurately reflect the mission and values of the department".

The university clarified that the post had no connection with the Lakshmi Mittal and Family South Asia Institute, describing it as a "separate and distinct entity".

While CoHNA welcomed the apology as a rare step towards academic accountability, the episode has reignited debate online over how Hindu traditions are represented at western academic institutions.

Cannot promote IIM-C student with poor grades: HC to parents

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Kolkata: The Calcutta HC has refused to promote an IIM-C MBA student suffering from schizophrenia to the second year on ground of poor grades and attendance, observing an institution is the best authority to decide a student's welfare and that parents should play a "supporting role" rather than making it a case of "ego" as it "sets a wrong example for the child in the long run".

The student approached the HC after the institute directed him to repeat the first year and did not allow him to sit for placement with his batchmates on account of poor grades and attendance.

"... In such cases, sympathy or compassion should have no role to play and, in the event of doubt, the benefit should go to the institution rather than the student," single-judge bench of Justice Shampa Dutt (Paul) observed in its Feb 18 order.

The court said parents must not make it a case of 'ego' as it 'sets a wrong example for the child'

The institute had submitted that the student was given make-up exams on account of his medical certificate, but despite that, his score was low. His unadjusted grade was 4.4 and his adjusted grade was 3.4, when the required grade was 4.5.

On June 11 last year, the student emailed the administration stating that he could not do well in the first year because of his mental disability. The college administration replied stating that he missed exams in the academic year 2024-25. He got an 'F' grade in courses and was allowed to reappear, in which he got a 'C+'.

On May 13, 2025, the student emailed that he paid the acceptance fee for registration into the 62nd batch registration (which is repeating the first year). However, on June 11, 2025, he requested conditional permission for the second year. The second-year classes started on June 2, 2025, and instead of attending his first year (repeated year) classes, he moved the court.

'Shield' breaking down, women cardiac cases up 20% in 2 yrs: Mum hosp data

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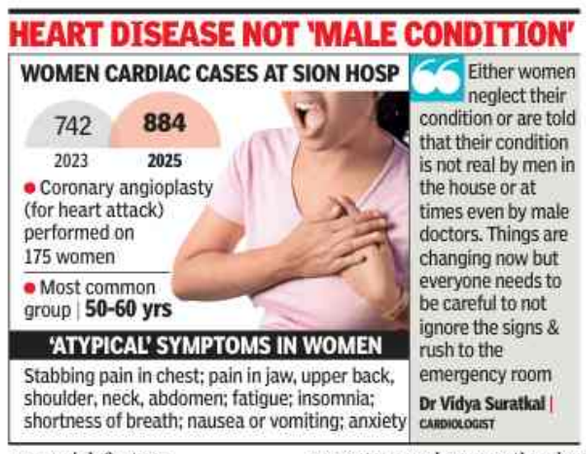
Mumbai: Medical literature has long held that heart disease primarily affects men and that women have a natural biological "shield" to a certain extent owing to the presence of oestrogen, but recent data from the civic-run Sion Hospital indicates that protection is breaking down.

Cardiac procedures among women at the hospital surged nearly 20% in two years — from 742 cases in 2023 to 884 in 2025. Even those in the age group of 20-40 underwent such procedures; the most common age group impacted was 50-60. Coronary angioplasty, which is performed in instances of heart attack, accounted for 20% of all cardiac procedures on women. Diabetes, tobacco and hypertension remain the primary risk factors.



Dr Pratap Nathani, head of the department of cardiology at Sion Hospital, said what was more concerning was that these women were referred to them through various OPDs and departments. "It never happened that they came to us us because they believed they were having a heart attack. It is common for women to neglect all types of illness. On top of that, the symptoms of heart attack in women are not classic."

He said the crisis in women was masked by "atypical symptoms" like acidity or fatigue, back pain, abdominal pain, jaw or neck pain, nausea, flu-like symptoms and even anxiety. "These could be mistaken for a wide range of ailments," Nathani said.

Such is the case with a patient Dr Vidya Suratkal has been treating at Lilavati Hospital for four years. A 28-year-old woman walked in with gastrointestinal issues but walked out with an angioplasty. "She came back with different arteries each time. She also underwent a bypass. There is no clear cause."

While doctors at Sion Hospital found stress to be a contributing factor in 16% of the cases, the cause in 1% of the cases every year is unknown.

Nathani and Suratkal said factors like pollution had a correlation with heart issues, but more data was needed to establish a clearer link.